

United Bible Societies

ASIA-PACIFIC

REGION

**TRANSLATOR
TRAINING
MANUAL**

*A World
Fellowship
of Bible Societies*

**UNITED
BIBLE
SOCIETIES**

United Bible Societies
Asia Pacific Region
Translator Training Manual
Trial Edition

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Preface

The training of translators is one of the primary responsibilities of Translation Officers both of the National Bible Societies and of the United Bible Societies. Over many years, UBS and UBS staff have produced a number of books, some of which have become standard textbooks for translator training worldwide. These books include E.A.Nida and C.R.Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1969); J. de Waard and E.A. Nida, *From One Language to Another: Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986); R. Omanson (ed.) *Discover the Bible* (United Bible Societies,2001); and most recently T. Wilt (ed.) *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2003). However the current challenges faced in training translators in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in terms of context and of theological and general educational background, together with developments in linguistic and translation theory, have meant that much of the earlier material is not easy to use directly. Nor does it cover all of the practical aspects of training. This manual has been produced in response to the felt need among Translation Officers in the Asia-Pacific region for practical, contextually relevant resources to use in translation workshops.

A working group from Asia-Pacific regional translation staff, consisting of Dr. Anicia del Corro (convenor), Dr. Maksal Hynniewta, Mr. Norm Mundhenk and Rev.Dr. Graham Ogden, was given the task of preparing and compiling materials which could be used in translation workshops in the region. Through exchange of drafted chapters, and occasional meetings they have produced this collection of these teaching resources in the areas of linguistics, biblical studies, translation procedures and project structure and organisation, together with notes on a number of passages which are suitable for practice translation in workshops..

The manual is intended primarily as a resource for Translation Officers, rather than as a textbook for trainee-translators. It is not suggested that the units be taught precisely in the order presented here. Everyone has their own teaching style and preference for the order and priority of components of a training syllabus. But Translation Officers will find here resources on most of the core elements of such a syllabus.

Discretion is necessary in the selection and presentation of this material, particularly with regard to the educational background of the students. In particular units like “Causes of Textual Variants” and “Biblical Studies and Bible Translation” should be used only with those who can profit from such relatively advanced material. Other units, especially those in Section Four: Translation Principles, are written with the audience of trainee translators in view and could easily be handed out to classes as resources. Similarly the “Checklist of Some Important Biblical Terms” and the unit on “Divine Names” could be distributed as they stand, for students’ reference and classroom use. The Practice Passages provide notes to help Translation Officers prepare trainees to translate these passages within the workshop situation. They supplement such material as is available in the Translators Handbooks.

This present volume remains a “Trial Edition”. It is offered in the hope that it will be of benefit to Translation Officers in their task of training. The committee welcome feedback from any who use it. Comments and queries should be directed to the UBS Asia-Pacific Area Translation Coordinator, “Daud Soesilo”aspATCO@ubs-translations.org

Stephen Pattemore, Editor,
June 2006

Note: This electronic version is hyperlinked through a brief Table of Contents at the front and a more detailed Table of Contents at the end.

Table of Contents

Section One: Introduction

Unit One: Some Basic Questions Answered	1
Unit Two: Ideology and Translation	3

Section Two: Language

Unit Three: Introduction to Language	5
Unit Four: Language and Society	9
Unit Five: Semantic Domains and Bible Translation	16
Unit Six: Discourse Analysis	27

Section Three: Biblical Studies

Unit Seven: How the Bible Came to Us	33
Unit Eight: Causes of Textual Variants	43
Unit Nine: Bridging the Gaps	49
Unit Ten: Checklist Of Some Important Biblical Terms	57
Unit Eleven: Divine Names	60
Unit Twelve: Biblical Studies and Bible Translation	63

Section Four: Translation Principles

Unit Thirteen: Implicit and explicit information	68
Unit Fourteen: Translating Figurative Language	90
Unit Fifteen: Where Do We Find Words We Don't Have?	101
Unit Sixteen: Bible Translation Frames	120

Section Five: The Translation process

Unit Seventeen: Structures and Procedures	144
Unit Eighteen: Revising Older Translations	154
Unit Nineteen: The Use of Computers in Translation	163

Section Six: Practice passages

Practice Passage One: The Book of Ruth	167
Practice Passage Two: The Book of Jonah	185
Practice Passage Three: Mark Chapter One	195
Practice Passage Four: John Chapter Nine	204
Practice Passage Five: Paul's Letter to Philemon	213

Detailed Table of Contents	218
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[\[Go to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION

UNIT ONE

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Some Basic Questions Answered

1.1 Why do we need a translation?

The Word of God is for all. This is the reason why the Bible Society movement sees its mission as making the Bible available to the peoples of the world in languages they understand, in formats they appreciate and at prices they can afford. If we believe the Bible is for all, these three basic functions of the Bible Society movement naturally follow. But why do we think the Bible is for all?

One of the greatest facts about human history is that God has revealed himself to human beings. God's graciousness is seen in his choosing to have a relationship with the people whom he created. God inspired different people to record the way they experienced this relationship in various forms. They expressed these in various forms, such as historical accounts, songs that expressed their emotions, and things that God had taught them, including what God said he would do in the future. These writings are found in the different books of the Bible.

As God chose to have a relationship with people, he made it clear that he wants to be understood. The ultimate proof of this is that God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, who through his life communicated God's message of love for everyone. Jesus spoke a human language, just like all the other writers whom God inspired. The people who wrote the Bible wrote mainly in Hebrew and Greek because those were the languages used in the places where they lived.

Unfortunately, ancient Hebrew and Greek are known by very few people today. This is the reason why we need to translate the Bible into modern languages so that God's message of love and salvation can be understood and accepted by everyone.

1.2 What is Bible translation all about?

The ultimate goal of Bible translation is to make the message of the Bible understandable to those who cannot read the Bible in the original languages. Translation strives to represent the intentions of those who wrote the source text so that those intentions will be understood and appreciated by people today.

Every Bible translation must meet at least three basic requirements, each of which can be described as a dimension of faithfulness. These are faithfulness to the original text, faithfulness to the receptor language, and faithfulness to the whole Christian community.

Faithfulness to the original text means that the translation must represent as closely as possible the intentions present in the original text. In practice most Bible translations have followed one of two different approaches. Some translators make the linguistic forms of their translation as close as possible to the forms of the original text. Other translators give priority to making sure that the meaning of the translation reflects the meaning of the original text. Both groups would argue that their approach is the best way to be faithful. These two approaches are often referred to as formal and dynamic (or functional) equivalence, respectively.

Faithfulness to the receptor language means that the translation must not only be clearly understood but it must fit the receptor language standards of good, natural language, in a style appropriate to the contents. The Bible Society recognizes the need for a translation to be

understood by its intended audience, otherwise the whole endeavour is useless. To be comprehensible, a translation must use language in the way that it is used by the intended audience. Language that is unnatural makes a translation difficult to understand. This applies to both syntactic forms and vocabulary.

Faithfulness to the whole Christian community reflects Bible Society's commitment to serve the whole church. It is therefore expected that Bible Society translations do not express any bias to a particular doctrinal position. Some doctrines are very well entrenched in the biblical text and these should be translated accurately. However, the translation should not try to accommodate a particular doctrine or view which may be favoured by the translator or the intended audience or by some but not all denominations or confessions within the receptor community.

In most cases, Bible translations are done because churches have expressed the need for a particular translation. The Bible Society fulfils its role as an arm of the church and serves as custodian of the biblical text. Sometimes, the Church requests the Bible Society to initiate a translation project. At other times, the Bible Society itself may sense the need for a particular kind of translation. In both cases, the Bible Society may call for a consultation to validate this possible need. The Bible Society tries its best to have a good representation from the different churches or other groups that have an interest in such a translation. The consultation is the venue to discuss the type of translation, whether formal or dynamic, whether a new translation is to be done or simply a revision of an existing one and other similar matters. Throughout the project, there is usually a close cooperation between the BS and the churches, and many times resources are shared by both.

One requirement of Bible Society translations is that the translators must be native speakers of the receptor language. Because of this, translators may have a wide range of educational attainments. Some may have doctoral degrees while others are high school graduates. However, because Bible translation is not usually taught even in universities or seminaries, all translators are trained for their work in translation workshops. Bible translation begins with the provision of adequate training for translators, enabling them to work independently to produce a good translation.

A common fear among Bible users is that a translation might embody the biases of the translator. That is why the Bible Society has developed a translation process which ensures the objectivity and high quality of a translation. The draft translation produced by a translator is reviewed by at least four different people in four different stages before it is finalized and then approved by the supervising Translation Consultant.

Bible translation today uses the latest technology to assist translation teams to produce a good translation. Computer software has been developed especially to assist Bible translators. This assists in attaining the Bible Society's goal of producing error-free Bibles.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT TWO

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Ideology And Translation

2.1 Ideology: our world view and the world of the Bible

“Ideology” refers to the beliefs, myths and symbols of a social movement, social class or group. Individuals typically share the belief systems of the communities to which they belong. Ideology includes not only the ideas of such groups but also their plans for putting those ideas into action. So one might well ask what this has to do with Bible translation. There are two possible perspectives on ideology as it relates to the Scriptures. On the one hand we can talk about the ideology of the biblical books and writers/editors, the beliefs and ideas present in the text of Scripture; on the other hand we can focus on the ideology of the ones doing the interpreting and translating. For our purpose here we shall focus on the latter and leave the former to a study of biblical ideologies or theologies.

Those of us engaged in Bible translation do not belong to the two primary biblical cultures of Old and New Testaments. We belong to a historical period different from that of the biblical worlds. Bible translators come from cultures very different from those present in the pages of Scripture. We are very much products of our own times and cultures. We also have differing theological experiences, and these too impinge on our understanding of the text and thus on its interpretation and translation. Our own theological predispositions, our cultural heritages and those things that give us our identity contribute to our ideologies. Inevitably we bring these to the task of translating, though for the most part we are not conscious of the impact they have. Translators may think that they should be completely objective in dealing with the biblical text. However, that is not always, if ever, possible since we inevitably bring to the task our own cultural “baggage.”

2.2 Conscious ideological bias

Some people would consider the word “ideology” to be something negative, but it need not be. None of us is without a set of beliefs that affects the way we see ourselves and the world; that is our personal ideology. However, it can give rise to some problems that Bible interpreters and translators should try to avoid – first, the conscious desire to find in the biblical text ideas and notions that we wish to find there and to justify, and secondly the unconscious importing into the text of ideas that are foreign to it but which are part of our own worldview. It is very easy to impose our own perspectives on a text and then to see the text as confirming them. Some feminist interpretations, some liberation theologies, post-colonial studies and personal doctrinal understandings, all can read into the text the views they seek to sanction or support. This can be quite overt and deliberate. For example:

- We may find it difficult to accept the notion that people in OT and NT experienced domination by evil spirits. This could lead us to render those texts that speak of them in purely psychological terms.
- The pre-scientific picture of a three-level universe such as we have in Genesis is something we might wish to modify by the way we translate because it doesn’t fit with modern scientific knowledge about the universe.
- The NT evidence for a doctrine of the Trinity may be imposed on the OT so that wherever it speaks of the spirit of God, as in Genesis 1.2, we translate it in such a way as to mark it as a reference to the Holy Spirit. (In English this is usually done by using a capital letter for the word “Spirit.”) However, good translators do not seek consciously to bring personal agendas or doctrinal views into their translation. They are careful to render the text as it is.

2.3 Sub-conscious ideological bias

The other problem for translators to confront is not so much the cultural and personal views of which we are conscious, but those we might unsuspectingly bring to the text. For example:

- In a society where consumption of alcohol has caused a major social problem and the church has taken a stand against it, the translator may feel the need to avoid the term “wine” in favour of “grape juice.”
- Where a translator has a particular view of the nature of Scripture it may lead to harmonizing passages which differ from one another – an example might be in translating an OT passage quoted in the NT so that it agrees with the wording of the NT text.
- The term chosen for “baptism” may reflect our denominational allegiance. We choose the term we are familiar with from our church tradition even though other terms may also be exegetically appropriate.
- Translators may fail to recognize that throughout the Scriptures there is a development of thought with regard to certain theological ideas. This can influence their translation. A case in point is the emerging understanding of what happens after death. For example, in the OT Sheol is the place to which all dead persons go regardless of whether they are good or bad. Failure to appreciate this could lead to imposing NT ideas of Hell on the rendering of the term Sheol - see Psa 9.17 and many examples in KJV and NKJV.

Many other examples could be given but these are enough to demonstrate that the translator is heavily influenced by many factors. Translators may import their own cultural views and other values into their renderings of the biblical text without being aware that they are doing so. It is easily done when one is not fully aware of the differences between one’s own world and that of the biblical text.

2.4 Faithfulness and sensitivity to context

For a Bible Society translator who seeks to be faithful to the meaning of the texts, any attempt to slant the translation according to personal theological or political views must be rejected. Translators are called to render the meaning of the text within the guidelines of responsible scholarship and in a manner that is not sectarian. It is a task that calls the translator to become more aware of those factors that can distort the meaning of the original text and to ensure that they are minimized. These personal agendas cannot be totally eliminated when their influence is unconscious, but translators must endeavour to keep them to an absolute minimum.

In many modern English language translations there is a conscious decision to use what is called “inclusive language.” This may not be appropriate in other languages but if the translator is influenced by an English model text this tendency may be adopted without sufficient thought being given to its relevance in the target language and culture. For example, the translators of the NRSV decided to adopt the use of plural pronouns to avoid the use of masculine pronouns when the reference was to both men and women. But if this device is simply copied from the NRSV it may not be at all appropriate in a receptor language with a very different way of using pronouns.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

SECTION TWO – LANGUAGE

UNIT THREE

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Introduction To Language

3.1 Defining Language

What is language?

It is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used in human communication. These symbols may be produced vocally or visually.

Why a “system”? Because language is ordered, systematic. It is characterized by patterns that show regularity of occurrence. In this sense it is rule-governed. Because it is governed by a set of rules, a person can say new things, which have never been heard or never used before, but which conform to the rules and so can be understood by people who know the rules.

Why “arbitrary”? There is no intrinsic connection between a thing and its name. Every word that is used for a particular object or concept is chosen as part of convention. But many times, this is done unconsciously.

Why “vocal”?

The primary form of language is that which is spoken, thus vocal. There are other forms by which language is used such as the written form, or with the use of signs.

Why does it use symbols?

It is in the nature of language that it uses symbols, or things that will stand for other things. Thus, the sounds combined to form the word BOY (b, o, y) stand for the meaning of BOY. Can you imagine what would happen if language was not symbolic? You’ll have to have a boy to show to your listener whenever you need to refer to one.

Why “human”?

Language is used by people. There are other forms of communication, but when one says ‘language’, what is meant is that which people use.

Why does it have to be used in communication?

Can you call it language if you are the only one who can use it?

3.2 Terms used in connection with language

DIALECT is a variation of a language. If one language that one speech community uses has regular differences from that spoken in another community, and these two communities understand each other, this is a case of one language having two variants, or two dialects. Dialects can differ in the sounds used, in intonation, how words are formed, vocabulary and even in syntax.

Are you aware of any reference in the Bible about geographical dialects? See Judges 12.6, Matt 26.73.

Can you identify some dialects in your language?

In another situation when the speakers of the two speech communities do not understand each other, what may be supposed to be two dialects are actually separate languages. The criterion used here to identify if the dialects belong to one language or not is mutual intelligibility.

In Bible Translation, how important is it to choose the right dialect in the translation?

STANDARD LANGUAGE is a variety of a language that is written, acceptable to the learned, not limited to any particular region and functions in a community as the appropriate norm for communication, in activities of social prestige and as a symbol of identity, pride and unity.

NATIVE LANGUAGE is the language that a person acquires as a child in a natural setting. Because of this, the person is usually most proficient and most expressive in this language.

FIRST/SECOND LANGUAGE refers to the order by which languages are acquired by an individual. Thus, the first language learned in childhood is the first language, and the second one is the second language, and so on. In a country or region where there is a dominant foreign language, this language is usually learned as a second language such as English in the Philippines, Spanish in some parts of Mexico and Guatemala, and French in Haiti. In a multilingual country, the national language most often becomes the second language of the people who have a different native language.

In the Bible Society context, one of the qualifications required of Bible translators is that they be native speakers of the receptor language. Do you think this is important? Why?

LINGUA FRANCA When two people who speak different languages need to communicate with each other, they need to resort to another language which both of them know. This third language is the lingua franca. This term is actually derived from a medieval trade language called Lingua Franca used in the Mediterranean region and largely based on Romance languages with elements of Greek, Arabic and Turkish. In the modern world, it is fair to say that English is one of the most important, if not the most important lingua franca since it is spoken by a large sector of the world population.

In multilingual situations, some people think that it is best to do a Bible translation first in the lingua franca because this means that more people will have access to God's word while other translations are being done. What do you think?

PIDGIN is a speech variety that develops when speakers of two or more different languages come in contact and have no shared language by which they can communicate, but still have to learn to communicate within a limited period of time. There are no native speakers of a pidgin but once it becomes more stabilized in a community and children grow up using this language variety, then the pidgin becomes a **CREOLE**.

Do you know of any pidgin or creole in your country? Do you think it is all right to have a Bible Translation in a creole?

LIVING/DEAD LANGUAGE As long as a language has at least one surviving native speaker, that language is alive. But as soon as the last native speaker dies, the language dies, too. Active usage by a growing population, especially of children, is the sign of life for a language.

The Hebrew and Greek used in the Bible are considered to be dead languages. The Hebrew language was revived upon the formation of the nation of Israel. The Greek of the New Testament has now evolved into modern Greek.

Are you aware of languages that show signs of dying? Should the Bible Society embark on projects involving such languages?

3.3 Notions to be remembered, misconceptions to be discarded

Are there superior languages?

Many people think that there are, and for this reason, people desire to know how to speak these languages, such as English. But their reasons vary as to why a particular language is perceived as superior. For some, it is the size of the population that uses it. For others, it is the prestige that accompanies the use of that language. Again for some, it is the existence of a written grammar of that language. And still for others, it is the availability of terms found in that language, which are absent in other languages.

For the first three reasons given, it is actually the society that uses the language that is being evaluated and not the language itself. It is in the fourth reason that a language is pitted against another language. So as the argument goes, English has many more technical terms for example 'computer' than, say Tagalog, a Philippine language. But I can use the same argument to show that the English language lacks some words in a particular domain, such as in agriculture, when compared to Tagalog.

Thus there are no superior languages, and no inferior languages. All languages are adequate to the needs of the speakers of that language. Tagalog does not have a word for snow because there is no snow in the Philippines where Tagalog is spoken. Every concept or anything from the material culture that is significant and therefore needs reference would have a word for it. Inversely, if the word is not there, it means that it was not needed.

All languages have a complex structure, no matter how few the speakers are. And every language has a history that would show its relationship with other languages.

Why is it important for Bible translators to know that their language is not inferior to any other language?

Are some languages more beautiful than others?

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or in the ear of the listener, as far as language is concerned. It is all relative. What sounds beautiful or euphonic to some may be the opposite for others. When it comes to beauty, nothing is absolute.

Who can say when a sentence or a part of it is used correctly or not?

The native speaker of that language can. The native speaker has the competence to tell when a word or an utterance is acceptable in a language. They are the ones who have the ability and intuition to declare something as grammatical or not.

However, you might have heard native speakers of English say, "We was there". This is a deviation from the standard language, and, from the point of view of some people, it is sub-standard. But if it is part of the dialect of a community of native speakers of English, then from the point of view of their particular dialect it is still correct.

Does this concept of correctness in any way affect the confidence of the translator?

Do languages change?

The constant thing about language is change. Language change is a result of the change that occurs in the individual, the individuals in the society or just about any aspect in the society. Thus, the more changes there are in the society, the more changes in the language also.

Do you speak like your grandmother? Probably not, and you will easily note differences between your use of language and hers. Some linguistic changes are more obvious than others and

vocabulary is one such example. Reading a book written at least fifty years ago will allow you to spot archaic words easily. Phonological changes in language take longer to be noticed. The Great English vowel shift covered a period from the Middle English period (1100-1500) continuing into the eighteenth century. Semantic change is very subtle and it is for this reason that the Bible translator should take particular interest in this. One good example is the word 'gay'. This used to mean "bright, happy" but in many variations of English it now means "homosexual".

*Why do you think some people want to retain archaic forms of language?
Can language be corrupted? Or enriched, or improved?*

What are the two ways to analyze language?

The two ways are diachronic and synchronic. In diachronic analysis, one looks at a description of the language as it changes through time. For example, a comparison of Middle English and Modern English would necessarily take a diachronic approach. This is also called a historical approach.

A synchronic approach looks at the characteristics of a language at a given period of time. For example, a description of how interrogatives are formed in Modern Tagalog would be considered synchronic. This is also called a descriptive approach.

A good linguistic analysis of any language must include both historical and descriptive analyses.

Can you force people to use language in a particular way?

Yes, you can. This is usually done by people or by an institution who think they have the competence and authority to establish a standard how language is to be used. For example, literature boards of some communities, language enthusiasts who have a strong opinion about language use, and writers may want to revive archaic, obsolete words, continue to use such words and try to impose their usage in any way that they can.

There are times when it may be necessary to impose rules about language, for example, in standardizing a spelling system, or in order to implement a consistent way to transliterate proper nouns. But a prerequisite to any such prescription should be a good linguistic analysis of the language.

Do people sometimes impose their rules on the use of language in Bible Translation?

Yes, indeed. Because the Bible is the word of God, convictions run deep. Preaching is not confined to the pulpit but encroaches on translation as well.

Many times theological terms are expected to be translated in words that are formal and literary rather than popular and ordinary even if the latter are more easily understood. Examples of these words are: justification, sanctification, election, grace.

Read: "Why translate the Bible – to educate or to communicate?" in Wonderly (1968), pp. 47-49.

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT FOUR

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Language And Society

4.1 Language and speech

People constantly use language, an ability that is unique to them. People use language not because they are able to but because they need to. As social beings, people need to communicate with others.

As people communicate with others, the biological being is transformed into a social being. This process is called socialization. The person ceases to be just a breathing individual but becomes a part of a family, a peer group, a church, a nation, in fact a part of humanity. When this happens, the individual is exposed to a system of behaviour prevalent in the society. It is at this point that the use of language is aptly called speech. The speech behaviour of individuals will make them project themselves as unique individuals while participating in a particular society.

4.2 Norms

People can say whatever they want and can say it in whatever way they prefer. However, there are ways that language is used, which the society has identified as good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable. This normative system, whether known consciously or unconsciously, is composed of rules which influence people as they use language to interact with one another.

In a small town in Indiana, it is perfectly all right to say, “We was there.” But people who have been exposed to the kind of American English spoken in the wider American community would frown upon this and call it ungrammatical. Thus, the system of norms which operates in this small town is different from the system that operates in Standard English.

When native speakers of the English language ask the question, “How are you?”, what is the usual answer? Do people always mean what they say?

[In fact this is an example of a conventional greeting. The speaker may have little interest in the state of health of the listener but is simply being polite. Other languages will perform the same function by using different forms of words.]

From the many possible ways of addressing people, there is a system by which one term of address is used depending on the type of social relationship a person has with the other. A certain physician by the name of Dr. John Smith can be addressed differently, as:

“Dr. Smith” by his patient

“Doc” by a lawyer

“Smith” by another doctor

“Sir” by a younger person

“Mac” or “Buddy” by a construction worker who stops to ask the time

“Smitty” or “John” by a close friend

Sonny, dear, or Dad by different members of his family

What accounts for the shift from one form of address to another?

The way people use language reflects the social relationship that exists between the speaker and the listener. For this reason, you cannot interchange the different forms of address above. To do so would be a violation of the system of rules for the choice of forms of address.

4.3 Factors that determine the choices made in language use:

There are a number of factors that determine the choice of term or variety of language used. These are: the relative status of the speaker to the hearer, a person's social or geographical background, the speech situation and the speaker's intention.

4.3.1 Relative status of the speaker to the hearer:

What are the factors that affect the relative status of the speaker to the hearer? These are: age (particular honorifics are used to address older people); gender (a male person may be more careful about his language in the presence of women); socio-economic status (in some societies, the English language may be used to show off.); education (the university professor's choice of vocabulary would greatly differ from that of a taxi driver.); rank (a general may call a corporal by his surname.)

Bert is a 15-year-old high school student. He sees a number of people at school. How do you think he would say 'hello' to: Mr. Reyes, his teacher; Lily, his classmate; Tony, his best friend and Max, the storekeeper?

4.3.2 A person's social and geographical background

The place where a person is born, reared and lives determines the kind of language used by that person. Thus, a person becomes a speaker of a particular language, and within that language, a particular dialect. Geographical dialects are variants of a language based on the geographical location. This is one of the things over which an individual does not have very much control. Aside from the geographical dialect, there are also social dialects used by people in the same social group who share many characteristics. People from the same profession usually share an occupational dialect because they have many common terms. Another word for this occupational dialect is "jargon".

Who do you think would use the following terms to mean 'death': died, expire, went to be with the Lord, passed away, kicked the bucket, fall asleep, check out?

Sometimes, a speech variety is used by a group whose members wish to conceal themselves or some aspects of their communication from non-members. This secret language is called an *argot*. It started to be used in the 17th century as the speech variety used by French beggars and street merchants, and later was applied to the secret language of criminals. The "gay lingo" is one such example of an argot. It is used by members of the male homosexual community. Some examples of expressions in the English language which arose as part of this argot are: butch 'very masculine for a woman, macho for a man; come out 'disclosing one's homosexuality'; in the closet 'relating to concealing of one's homosexuality'. Note, however, that some of these terms have subsequently become part of more general English, broadening their domain of usage

Slang is casual, playful or even irreverent speech characteristic of a particular group. It is the informal or faddish usage of nearly anyone in the speech community. The term was first attested in English in the mid-eighteenth century. At that time, it was used in reference to "special vocabulary used by any set of persons of a low or disreputable character". Now it is often applied to aspects of the language of adolescents or others who are perceived as speaking non-standard varieties of a language. The non-standard variety usually gives the users a group identity distinct from the rest of the community.

The vocabulary of slang changes rapidly: what is new and exciting for one generation is old-fashioned for the next. Old slang often either drifts into obsolescence or becomes accepted into the standard language, losing its eccentric colour.

In a book, "Contemporary Linguistic Analysis" (1996), the following examples were given as slang in American English.

- morphological change where the suffix -ing is shortened to -in (e.g. looking > lookin)

- hoss 'stud; muscular male'
- eddie 'ugly guy'
- wilma 'ugly girl'
- gagger 'disgusting person'

Do you think there is room for slang words or expressions in Bible translations?

4.3.3 Speech Situation

The factor that accounts for the most variety in the speech of a particular person is situation. This refers to the context that the speakers are in. A situation is defined as a speaker and listener relating to each other in a particular way, communicating about a particular topic in a particular setting. People who are fighting use a variety of language peculiar to that situation. Any shift in a speech situation will produce a shift in the way language is used. Such a shift could be produced by a change in topic of conversation, setting or change in the emotional relationship between the speaker and the hearer.

Can you think of characteristic words or phrases used by a pastor ministering to his flock?

4.3.4 Formality

One aspect of situation that will cause differences in the way language is used is formality. In general, four levels of formality in situation can often be distinguished: formal, regular, casual and intimate. (Individual languages may have their own set of levels, more or less complex than this.)

- In a **formal** situation, the hearers mainly listen and if they respond, they do so in a stereotyped way. The speaker's purpose is to inform or to impress and he or she tends to assume an attitude of detachment, expecting minimal participation from the audience. Full grammatical constructions are used, nothing is left out, more learned vocabulary is used, and there is an elaborate sentence structure in an effort to show the relationships between the different items of information being communicated. Examples of such are sermons and lectures to a large audience.

What do you think is the speech variety that characterized the language of Paul as he defended himself before King Agrippa in Acts 26? Is this (close to) formal language?

- A **regular** communication situation is typically an exchange of information between relative strangers. Each participant supplies background information, as the response of the other becomes necessary in order to be understood. The speaker usually depends on the listener's response to determine whether he is being understood. This type of speech also tends to use fuller forms rather than ellipsis (leaving things out). An example of this regular speech is in a first meeting between two people for a job interview.

In Acts 10.17ff, when Peter speaks with the men sent by Cornelius and later on with Cornelius himself, do you think the speech variety is regular or casual?

- **Casual** speech also often involves an exchange of information but among friends and acquaintances. The speaker treats the hearer as an 'insider' by assuming that there is common information with the hearer, and therefore does not need to supply as much information. The casual uses a lot of ellipsis compared to the fuller constructions of the regular variety.

Before the boys who made fun of Elisha were killed by two bears in 2 Kings 2.23, what kind of speech variety do you think did they use?

- **Intimate** speech is used between the closest of friends, not so much to exchange information as to share feelings. It involves the use of abbreviated expressions which are in many cases private ones known only to the participants themselves.

Examine Genesis 42-45. Can you detect any difference in the language used between Joseph and his brothers before and after he tells them who he is? Look at the way they address each other, and the honorific words they use.

In William Wonderly, *Bible Translations for Popular Use*, p.17 classifies three contemporary English Bible translations according to the differentiation above: J.B. Philipps, *The New Testament in Modern English* as tending toward regular or casual, *The New English Bible* as formal and *Today's English Version* as casual.

4.3.5 Written language

By virtue of the medium used, written language tends to be rather formal. This can be attributed to the fact that written language is more permanent, having a concrete physical character which provides a more secure basis for evaluation than does spoken language. Because of this, people are more careful with their use of language when they write, than when they speak. And because of this care, the language user inevitably is inclined to become more formal.

Just as in a formal speech situation, the writers cannot immediately interact with their audiences. But in addition, writers are unable to convey meaning through modification of their speech, such as intonation, loudness and through body language. When a person speaks in a particular setting, a number of things can be present in the physical setting which can allow the speaker to use demonstratives or to simply point to something, this may result in fragmentary or elliptical sentences. Writers are unable to do this and therefore need to use fuller expressions.

Certain types of elaboration, such as literary or rhetorical embellishments, are acceptable and often desirable in written style, while elaborations in the direction of slang, jargon and substandard usage are generally unacceptable except when used in dialogue to portray character types. Thus in a novel it is common to find that the narrative is in a fairly formal style, while dialogue between characters contains significant use of slang and other sub-standard language, as well as ellipsis.

There is an existing translation of the Bible in Classical Arabic. However, in recent years, a good meaning-based translation was produced in Modern Arabic. The translation was not readily accepted. However, when the meaning-based translation was put in audio, the people welcomed the translation. What do you think is the reason for this?

4.3.6 Intention

Very closely related to situation is another factor that determines language variety, namely intention. Every speaker has a goal in mind and that is the reason why various linguistic features are used. Because of intention, every available feature of the language is used to achieve the effect desired, whether it is to impress, to praise, to enhance one's status or simply to be pleasant and logical. One aspect of intention is what Peter Farb (1974) calls word play. He defines it as an interaction according to well-defined rules in which something is at stake that both speakers are attempting to win. Consider the following dialogue between a jeepney driver in Manila and a traffic officer. After committing a traffic violation the following conversation ensues:

“Prrk” (sound of a whistle from the traffic officer)

Driver speaking to himself: Oh no! The ‘parak’ saw me. (‘parak’ is a Tagalog slang for policeman.)

Traffic officer approaches and says: All right. Let me see your driver's license.

Driver: Oh, Officer, I'm so sorry. The truck in front of me is too tall that I did not see the red light.

How does this interaction show that intention influences a change in language?

What sort of intention is behind the way language is used in 2 Kings 18-19?

Consider Amos 7; Joshua 2.1-7; Nathan before David; Judges 16.15 (Delilah)

4.4 Sociolinguistics and related terms

Viewing language as we have been doing is part of the study of the sociology of language, also known as sociolinguistics. Sociolinguistics examines the interaction between the use of language and the social context where language is used. From this point of view, the form of language is never separated from the context in which it is used. Sociolinguistics can be divided into various types. One such classification distinguishes between a descriptive (or synchronic) approach of examining language variation between different communities at a given point in time, and a dynamic (or diachronic) approach of studying the change in language usage over time.

4.4.1 Descriptive sociolinguistics

Descriptive sociolinguistics tries to provide an answer to the question 'who speaks what language (or variety), to whom, when and for what purpose?' Others call this the ethnography of speaking. This approach tries to describe language use and the behaviours that go along with it, and to show the systematic nature of alternations between one variety and another. In order to understand language use in such a framework, it is necessary to consider other linguistic features such as pitch, loudness, quality of voice and intonation. Examples of extra-linguistic features are gestures, eye contact and distance between speakers.

It is one thing to know the structure of the language, but only a person who truly knows the language would know the right time to say something. Such a person has internalised the accepted patterns of interaction within a community.

How might loudness or gesture modify meaning?

4.4.2 Dynamic Sociolinguistics

In order to fully understand why we use language the way we do, one has to go beyond the 'what' and the 'when', and go to the 'why' of things. Dynamic sociolinguistics tries to account for changes in the way language is used over time. What gives rise to changes, why do they spread and what influence do such changes have upon other structures of the language?

What do you think is the meaning of "cool" to teenage English speakers? Young adults? Older people?

4.4.3 Linguistic repertoire

This is the range of linguistic varieties that a particular person has at their disposal to communicate in different social settings when talking about different topics to different people. These different varieties can include dialects, styles or register and even language. Thus, a person with a wide linguistic repertoire may be able to speak different languages depending on the need of the situation and may be able to adjust the level of speech according to the comprehension level of their audience.

Do you think different registers can be used in a Bible translation?

4.4.4 Diglossia

Diglossia is a phenomenon where two distinct languages are used by the same group of people. Usually, one is regarded as more prestigious than the other. Consequently, the higher one or more prestigious one is used in formal and public occasions whereas the lower one is used in everyday circumstances.

It could be that the two distinct varieties are separate languages, such as English and Filipino in the Philippines; or distinct varieties of the same language, such as Classical Arabic and the various vernacular forms for Arabic. French is the “high” variety in Haiti, but Creole is “low”. Such societies are usually bilingual. But whereas the “low” variety is known by everyone, the “high” one is usually acquired through education.

Some scholars believe that after the Babylonian exile, Hebrew ceased to be spoken in everyday life. They say the people commonly spoke Aramaic and only used Hebrew as a language for reading and writing religious matters. That would be a case of diglossia.

4.4.5 Code-switching

Code-switching is a common practice in a context of diglossia, where a single speaker can use two or more different varieties of language at different times. In code-switching, speakers change from one language to another in the middle of a speech, or of a sentence, or simply whenever they decide to do so.

In Acts 22.37, there is a record of Paul speaking in Greek to the commander, then switching to Aramaic in v40 as he spoke to the crowd.

What do you think are the possible reasons for code-switching? Could it be the subject matter? Compare situations when you talk about computers and when you would talk about how you would celebrate Christmas in your family. Would you use a different language for each of the topics? Can you predict when a person is likely to switch codes?

Do you think switching codes should be allowed in Bible translations?

4.4.6 Language taboo and euphemism

People use language basically for communication. However, there are some things about which people do not talk openly. The linguistic norms of the particular society require that these concepts must be expressed in other ways, either indirectly, or using substitutions. This phenomenon is called language taboo.

Taboo is a word borrowed from the Tongan language, introduced into English first in the accounts of Captain James Cook’s expeditions to the Pacific. Its meaning ranges from sacred and consecrated to dangerous, forbidden and unclean. Generally, it means something unapproachable and it is principally expressed in prohibitions and restrictions.

Taboo words in most languages can be grouped into: bodily functions, parts of the body and activities related to sex, body excretions, curse words, negative notions such as disabilities, death and personal names.

The coping mechanism of language to deal with taboo is often through the use of euphemisms. This is a way of avoiding words that may seem offensive, obscene or somewhat disturbing to people. A euphemism is an acceptable way of saying something that is generally not perceived as acceptable. It is an index of what is considered unwholesome or distasteful to talk about.

A euphemism avoids the actual pronunciation of the taboo word. It is the physical structure of the word that has a strong repulsive effect. Languages cope with taboo through the use of borrowed words ('comfort room' for toilet among Tagalog speakers), an acronym (LBM for loose bowel movement), modified pronunciation (gosh to avoid saying God's name in English), rewording or rephrasing (sleep with someone for sex act; pass away for death; visually impaired for blind).

In the gospels, the account of Matthew usually avoids word "God" in the phrase "kingdom of heaven".

In the following verses, take note of the language taboo and the euphemistic expression used in the Bible translation you are using: Genesis 4.1, 16.4, 18.11, 24.2, Luke 2.5, John 19.30; 1 Sam 24.3.

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT FIVE

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Semantic Domains and Bible Translation

5.1 Introduction

When people begin to translate the Bible into a new language and culture, they soon meet words and expressions which are hard to translate. This is especially true of terms connected with the culture of the Bible. For example, what should the translator call the Temple in Jerusalem? Some translators have tried expressions like "the house of prayer". What should one call a preacher? Some translators have tried terms like "the one who speaks God's message."

However, if translators try to find new words one at a time as they come across them in their work, they are likely to get themselves into trouble. Let us say that some translators have decided that "house of prayer" is a good way to translate "Temple". But then they come to the word "synagogue". How should they translate this? It is quite possible that they will discover that "house of prayer" would be a better expression for "synagogue", and that they need to find a different term for the Temple.

Similarly, if translators decide to use "the one who speaks God's message" for "preacher", what are they going to do when they have to find a word for "prophet"? When they study the meaning of these terms more carefully, they may find that the meaning of "prophet" is closer to "the one who speaks God's message".

Translators can spare themselves this kind of trouble if they start their search for words in a different way. Instead of looking at these words one by one, they should look at a group of related words together. In this way, they can easily see how the words are alike and how they differ. They can identify the main components of meaning of each word, and decide which of these should be carried across in the translation.

Instead of translating "Temple" alone, and then having to revise everything when they come to "synagogue", translators should study the whole domain of "buildings used for worship" or even "buildings used for public purposes". Instead of translating "preacher" alone, and then having trouble when they need a word for "prophet", translators should study the whole set of words available in the Bible cultures for people carrying out religious functions: priest (including God's priests and the priests of the false gods), prophets, "seers" (as in 1 Samuel 9.9), Levites, disciples, apostles, bishops, deacons, evangelists, preachers, and so on.

The translator needs to study these terms not only as they are used in the Bible culture (in the Hebrew or Greek languages), but also as they are used in the language and culture of the translation. Only when the translator clearly understands the differences in meaning between each word in the original language, will it be possible to try to translate those terms into the new language. But translators should not make the same mistake in their own languages, and just choose words one-by-one as they need them. Instead, translators should also look at the whole set of words for the same area of meaning in their own languages and cultures, so as to have clearly in their minds the range of choices that are available and the differences of meaning that they carry.

5.2 The study of semantic domains

A group of words which are part of the same area of meaning are called a "semantic domain". As one studies the differences between the words, it becomes clear what types of things distinguish their meanings. These things are "categories of meaning". The specific choices that are available in each category of meaning are called "components of meaning".

For example, let us say we want to understand the words in the domain of alcoholic beverages in English – words such as beer, wine, whiskey, and brandy. As we begin to investigate these words, we will find that there are two important categories of meaning. The first concerns what the drink is made from, and the second concerns the way that the drink is made. In the category of what the drink is made from, there are two components: “made from grain” and “made from fruit”. In the category of how the drink is made, drinks can be made by fermenting or they can be made by distilling (which makes the alcohol content much higher). If we put the components of what a drink is made from across the top and the components of how a drink is made along the side, we get the following diagram:

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS (English)

category: <i>what drink is made from</i>			
	grain base		fruit base
category:			
<i>how made</i>			
fermented	beer		wine
distilled	whiskey		brandy

In fact, there are other words in English for alcoholic drinks which could also be studied and added to the list. Two words in particular require that we add extra components to what the drink is made from. The old drink called "mead" is made from honey, and rum is made from sugar cane. If we add these to the chart, it will look like this:

ALCOHOLIC DRINKS :

category: <i>what drink is made from</i>					
	grain base		fruit base	honey	sugar cane
category:					
<i>how made</i>					
fermented	beer		wine (including champagne)		mead
distilled	whiskey		brandy (including cognac)		rum

Let us look at another example. Every language has certain areas of meaning which are highly developed and where there are many words available, while other languages might have only a few options in this area of meaning. The English language is particularly rich in verbs with very precise meanings, giving meanings that are often provided in other languages by adverbs or ideophones (words or expressions with distinctive sounds that function like adjectives or adverbs). For example, there are many verbs in English for different ways of walking. This domain includes words such as amble, hike, limp, march, shuffle, stagger, swagger, stroll, stride, strut, tip-toe, totter, tramp, trudge, and waddle. As we think about the meanings of these words, we find that there are at least three categories of meaning that are important. First, several of these words describe a very precise kind of movement made when walking. Second, some of the words focus on the purpose, that is, the person's reason for walking. Finally, other words focus on the attitude of the person walking.

One way to display the words in this domain would be like this:

WAYS OF WALKING (English)

<i>categories of meaning:</i>	<i>movement when walking</i>	<i>reason for walking</i>	<i>attitude / feeling of person walking</i>
<i>words:</i>			
amble		acting as though no purpose / goal	
hike		to cover long distance	
limp	one foot not working correctly (maybe in pain)		
march	usually, many people walking in time		
shuffle	not able to lift feet high (of someone old or sick)		
stagger	difficult to walk straight (old or sick)		
swagger			as though very proud of oneself
stroll	slowly	no particular goal, perhaps enjoying scenery	
stride	long steps		confidently
strut	[stiffly?] [upright?]		as though on important business
tip-toe	using only toes	often, so as not to make noise	
totter	hard to keep one's balance (old or sick)		
tramp	with heavy step		
trudge			weary
waddle	back and forth gait (someone fat and heavy)		

Notice that in most cases the main component of meaning belongs in just one category. In this domain, there are only a few words with components in more than one category.

5.3 Steps in analyzing a semantic domain

What are the steps to be followed when trying to understand the various concepts in a particular semantic domain? A study of the different words available in Indonesian for "cutting" will help us to see the procedures for this type of analysis. We will refer at first only to the Indonesian words, without trying to give their meanings in English, because correct senses in another language can be chosen only after we see the components of meaning that the words carry.

Step 1) After choosing the area of meaning, try to think of all the words which belong in this set. For example, if looking for Indonesian words related to cutting, you might think of words such as: *belah, cincang, iris, pancung, penggal, sabit, sembelih*
(You would probably not think of them in this order, but these have been arranged alphabetically)

a) At first, it may not be possible to think of every word in the domain. People may think of more words as they go through the other steps. For example, someone doing this exercise in Indonesian might not think at first of words such as *gorok, kupas, sabit, sayat, terbang, tebas*. This is not a problem. Extra words can be added whenever one thinks of them.

b) You might not feel very sure about some of the words. An Indonesian speaker might wonder, "Does *putus* belong in this set? How about *cukur*? *Gunting*?" If you are not sure about certain words, leave them in to start with. They can always be dropped later if it turns out that they do not belong.

Step 2) The next step is to think about the way in which the words that have been collected differ from each other. What "categories of meaning" are needed to distinguish these different words?

When a group of Indonesians began to study these words for "cut", it seemed that there were at least four points that were important:

a) One way that these words were distinguished from each other was by **the type of cutting instrument** that was typically used in each case. For example, you would normally use a pisau "knife" or bambu "piece of bamboo" in order to *iris*, but to *sabit* would require an arit or *celurit* or *sabit* (various kinds of "sickle") and to *belah* would normally require a *parang* "large knife, bush knife, machete" or *kapak* "axe".

b) Another distinction between these words is based on **the type of thing that is usually cut**. *belah* suggests some kind of buah "fruit" or kayu "wood", whereas *iris* suggests ikan "fish" or *daging* "meat" or buah "fruit" and *gorok* is normally only used for leher "throat".

c) Another important way these words are distinguished is by **the method of cutting** that is used. For many of these words, a speaker of Indonesian can picture very clearly the action that is implied, although it may be a bit difficult to put it clearly into words. In some cases one almost feels that a video is needed to make sure that the action is understood.

d) A fourth distinction that seems important with these words is **the result of the cutting**. For example, *belah* suggests that the result will be several separate pieces. In the case of *pancung*, the result will be a head separated from the body.

Just as when you are listing the words themselves, there is no need to be too concerned if the list of categories is not completely accurate at this stage. You should begin by suggesting categories that seem important, but as the study proceeds you can always make changes.

Step 3) Once you have decided on the categories to be used, you can then prepare a chart. The various categories can be listed across the top of the chart, and the individual words can be listed down the left side of the chart. This will provide a matrix which can be filled in. You can then go through each of the words that have been found, listing in detail the components of meaning implied by that particular word in each of the categories.

For example, for the word *penggal*, the spaces might be filled in like this:

Under "instrument used" you might list *parang* "large knife", *pedang* "sword", *kapak* "axe".

Under "thing cut" you might mention fruit, meat, or heads

Under "way of cutting" you could try to describe the typical action associated with this word.

Under "result or purpose" you might write "several pieces" (in the case where the "thing cut" is a head, there would only be two: a body and a head).

The same kind of information should be filled in for each of the words listed.

Chart: Indonesian words for 'cut'

words:	tool used:	thing cut:	type of action:
belah parts	large knife, ax	board, fruit	divide into a few
cincang	large knife, sword	vegetables, meat	small quick chops
gergaji	saw	wood	sawing movement
gorok throat			to cut someone's
iris	knife	vegetables, fish, fruit	slicing (producing small slices)
libas forth	sword	body of enemy	swinging arm back and
pancung	machete, sword	person's head	one swift stroke
pangkas	scissors	hair	snip-snip
penggal	large knife, sword	fruit, meat, person's head	divide into sections
potong	all kinds of knives, ax, sword, scissors (this turned out to be the general term for this domain)		
sabit	sickle, grass knife	grass	
sayat	knife, razor sharp bamboo	meat	to remove skin
sembelih	knife	head of animal	to slaughter animal for meat
sunat	knife, razor, sharp bamboo	skin	for circumcision

words:	tool used:	thing cut:	type of action:
tebang	ax, saw, chain saw	tree	chopping or sawing
tebas	large knife, sickle	grass, person's head	swinging motion

Note: The Indonesian words are given without an attempt to translate them into English. In many cases there may not be exact English equivalents. But with the information given regarding components of meaning, it should be possible to find the closest equivalent in other languages.

Also, this is not an attempt to give an exhaustive analysis of this domain in Indonesian, but only a sampling to demonstrate the procedure.

Step 4) Once the chart is filled in, you need to see whether there is enough information to distinguish all of the different words. If not, you must try to think how those words that are not yet distinguished are actually different in meaning. Perhaps there is another category of meaning that needs to be added to make the study more accurate.

In this Indonesian study, it was found that after completing the chart, there was not enough information to fully distinguish *penggal* from *pancung*. Indonesian speakers had to think, "How are these words different from each other?" The answer was that they imply a different position of the victim. In the case of *penggal*, the victim lies down before having his head cut off. In the case of *pancung*, the victim is still upright (either standing or kneeling). So a new category had to be added to the four categories already being used, "position of the victim".

Once a new category has been added in this way, you should then look over each of the words again, with that category in mind, filling in the spaces. Do the meanings of other words also suggest the position of the thing being cut? Perhaps they do not in every case; this category may only be relevant for a few of the words. In that case you can leave some spaces blank in the chart. In this case, the position of the victim seemed relevant also to the word *gorok*. The person doing the cutting is ordinarily behind the back of the person whose throat is being cut.

Step 5) Finally, it is good to look over the chart again, trying to see whether all of the words that have been included really belong in this area of meaning. If some words seem out of place here, they can be dropped.

For example, two words originally on the Indonesian list have been omitted from the chart. One is the word *putus*. Certainly there are times when you might cut in order to *putus*. But the word itself does not seem to mean a way of cutting. The cutting is simply an incidental way in which to accomplish the purpose of *putus*, which means 'to break or sever' something.

There was a similar problem with the word *kupas*. Certainly people sometimes have to use a knife in order to *kupas*, so there might not be so much question about *kupas* as there is about *putus*. But *kupas* itself refers mainly to the result: removing the skin from something. Although cutting can be required, there are many things that do not need to be cut in order to be *kupas* (such as ripe bananas and some kinds of oranges).

People often find this kind of study about their own language to be very interesting even though it is about facts that in some sense everyone already knows. The reason for this is that we learn our own language as children (constantly adding more knowledge as adults, of course), and although we "know" what each of the words of our language means and how to use it, the details of how the domains are organized is usually subconscious. It is very interesting for us to discover the detailed way in which language is organized.

It should also be clear how valuable this kind of study could be for Bible translators. In the case of these words for cutting, once translators know exactly what the meaning of the Bible text is, it makes it much easier for them to select exactly the right word in Indonesian. In fact, it is sometimes valuable to work backwards, from the chart to the Bible. There may be contexts in the Bible which clearly imply a particular word in another language. However, because of the nature of translation, where the translator is working from a foreign language which may not have any word that matches that word in the translator's language, the translator may not think of the best word when translating that passage. However, if people who are quite familiar with the Bible look at a list of words in a semantic domain chart, they can often think of Bible passages where these words would be appropriate. Then they can go to those passages and check whether that word has been used in the translation of that passage or not. If not, it may be appropriate to change the translation and to use this more accurate word in that passage.

5. 4 Example of a semantic domain: Carrying things in Hula

Let us look at a semantic domain from a different (though distantly related) language, Hula from the southern coast of Papua New Guinea. In this case, an attempt was made to find all the words for ways of holding and carrying different kinds of things. The first attempt at analysis revealed 15 words. Discussion showed that most of the words involved carrying something directly, but two of the words meant that the thing being carried was carried by using a pole. In this case, we first found a major distinction in the domain based on whether or not an instrument (a pole) is used for the carrying. If a pole is used, then there are two different words, depending on whether the pole is carried by one person (*maruna*) or by two people at either end of the pole (*kewa*).

A discussion about the meaning of the remaining words suggested that key categories of meaning involved the part of the body used to carry with and the thing carried. Since there were just these two main categories of meaning, it was convenient to organize a chart rather differently from the way suggested above. Here, the various components from one category were put along the top of the chart, and the components from the second category were put along the side of the chart (as with the study of alcoholic drinks in English). The individual words were then placed in the boxes where the two components met.

Three different types of "things carried" affected the meaning of the words. Some words implied that someone was carrying something with a handle. Some words meant that someone was carrying a child. And finally, other words suggested that someone was carrying something else (that is, neither a child nor something with a handle). The second category of meaning concerned what part of the body was used for carrying the thing. In this case, there were eight different body parts that were relevant: the head, the shoulder, the arms, under the arm, the back, the hand, the mouth, and the teeth. The result of organizing all this is shown in the chart below.

WAYS OF CARRYING (Hula)

<i>what is carried:</i>	children	bags / things with handles	other things
<i>part of body:</i>			
head		ripu	repa
shoulder	guru	kavale	vua
arms	vai		pani
under arm			kariga kau
back	kei kau		
hand		apigelo	api
mouth			pamu
teeth			koli

As an example of how to understand the chart, if you carry things on your head, that is *repa*. Or, if you carry a child in your arms, that is *vai*. Or if you carry a bag, with the handle hanging over your shoulder, that is *kavale*.

Note that there are many gaps in the chart. This means that Hula does not have a particular word for that combination. There is no word for "to carry a child on one's head" or for "to carry something by holding the handle in one's teeth", or for "to carry things on one's back". Presumably this suggests that these types of activities are not common in Hula culture and that there has been no need to develop words to describe them.

Where might these words be used in the Bible? We would of course need to check with a Hula speaker to be sure that we were using the words correctly, but we might expect that certain words could be appropriately used in the following places:

kewa: 1 Chronicles 15.15, where the Levites carry the Ark on poles

repa: Genesis 40.16, where the Pharaoh's chief baker dreams of carrying baskets on his head

vua: Joshua 4.5, where each man is carrying a large stone on his shoulder

kavale: 1 Samuel 17.6, where Goliath carries a javelin "slung between his shoulders"

guru: Genesis 21.14, where Hagar carries Ishmael on her shoulder

guru and *vai*: Isaiah 49.22 in the TEV says simply, "they will bring your children home"; but the Hebrew (see NRSV, for example), is much more specific: the sons will be carried in the arms (*vai*) and the daughters on the shoulder (*guru*). Of course this is simply the way Hebrew parallelism works, and should not be understood literally. If such a thing were actually to happen in Hebrew culture, it is highly unlikely that any distinction would be made between the methods of carrying the sons and the daughters!

kariga kau: Jeremiah 38.12, where Jeremiah holds rags under his arms, to keep the ropes from hurting him as he was pulled up out of the well

pamu and *koli*: There are various passages where it seems clear that one of these words would be used, but only a Hula speaker could tell us which would seem appropriate to them. For example, Genesis 8.11, when the dove returns to Noah carrying an olive leaf in its beak (would the Hula consider a bird's beak to be a mouth or teeth?) And 1 Samuel 17.34-35, where David describes a lion or bear carrying off a lamb from the flock.

5.5 Comparing meanings of words across languages

It will be clear from the examples above that we cannot expect a semantic domain in one language to match very closely the way a semantic domain is organized in another language. It should also be clear that the meaning of a particular word in any given language will depend on how that word functions in relationship to the other words in the domain or domains that it belongs in. This means that the precise meaning of a word in one language will rarely be exactly the same as a word with a similar meaning in another language. This can be a major problem for translators, and it is a good reason why it is helpful for translators to think in terms of semantic domains instead of the meanings of individual words.

A simple example of this can be seen in comparing three Indonesian words with three English words. In English there are three kinds of birds known as 'swans', 'geese', and 'ducks'. Geese and ducks are perhaps thought of as quite similar in some ways, whereas one might be less inclined to think of swans in connections with them. In Indonesian there are three words, *angsa*, *itik*, and *bebek*, which are also names for various birds. If one wants to match the meaning of the English words with the Indonesian words, one finds that they work like this:

Indonesian	English
	--- swan
angsa -----	
	--- goose
itik ---	
	----- duck
bebek ---	

Indonesian distinguishes two different kinds of domestic duck which differ from each other in ways that most English speakers would not even notice. An English speaker has to be trained to tell the difference between *itik* and *bebek*, a difference which is immediately obvious to any Indonesian speaker. On the other hand, Indonesian speakers may have a great deal of difficulty seeing the difference between a 'goose' and a 'swan', which English speakers would ordinarily consider to be so different that no one could possibly confuse them, or even think of them in the same category. (This is partly because the metaphorical overtones of 'goose' and 'swan' are vastly different in English. A 'goose' is awkward, noisy, and possibly rather stupid. A 'swan' is beautiful, graceful, and a symbol of love.)

There is a Greek word *homologeō*, which in Greek-English dictionaries is said to mean 'to confess, to admit, to say plainly'. This word is used in such New Testament passages as these (quotations are from the REB):

Mat 7.23: Then I will *homologeō*, 'I never knew you. Out of my sight; your deeds are evil!'

Mat 10.32: Whoever will *homologeō* me before others, I will *homologeō* before my Father in heaven.

Jhn 1.20: [John the Baptist] readily *homologeō*, 'I am not the Messiah.'

Jhn 12.42: Even among those in authority many believed in [Jesus], but would not *homologeō* him on account of the Pharisees.

Act 24.14: But this much I will *homologeō*: I am a follower of the new way (the 'sect' they speak of)

1 Tim 6.12: For to this you were called, when you *homologeō* your faith so nobly before many witnesses.

Heb 11.13: They *homologeō* themselves to be strangers and aliens without fixed abode on earth.

1 Jn 1.9: If we *homologeō* our sins, he is just and may be trusted to forgive our sins.

In most of these passages, the English words 'confess' or 'admit' are quite appropriate. But what about the first example, Matthew 7.23? It is because of cases like this that the translation options in English include 'to say plainly'. From the English point of view, this seems to be a quite different meaning, almost opposite to 'confess' or 'admit'. But from the Greek point of view, the same word is appropriate for both situations. We would need to make a more careful study of the word and the domain or domains it fits in before drawing any definite conclusions, but perhaps the real meaning of the Greek is something like "to say openly something that one might ordinarily hesitate to say".

People would ordinarily hesitate to say something about themselves that might make people think less of them. It is in these contexts that English uses words like 'admit' or 'confess'. But similarly, someone might hesitate to say things concerning other people which they might not want to hear. If someone does say such a thing (as in Matthew 7.23), it is obviously out of the range of English "confess" or "admit". In such cases, in order to bring out the component of "something one might hesitate to say", the English says, "tell plainly". But you can see how it might be possible for Greek to think of all of these cases as examples of the same kind of situation, where the same word can appropriately be used.

5.6 The source languages

It should be obvious that this kind of study of the semantic domains of the source languages would be of very great value to translators. Translators should certainly make use of this kind of information whenever it is available. However, it is not as easy to get this kind of information as we might like.

When you are investigating a semantic domain in a living language and culture, such as Indonesian, you can get a group of people together who speak that language and who know the culture. Together these people can discuss each point until they come to some agreement. Or, if they cannot agree, this will perhaps show that even within the language different people understand the words in somewhat different ways. But where can we turn to get this kind of information for the source languages? Of course there are many scholars who know Hebrew and Greek very well. But Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek are both what are called "dead languages", which means that for a very long time there have been no native speakers of either of these languages (modern Hebrew and modern Greek are quite different from the languages used in the Bible). There is no one that we can ask for the kind of intuitive information that English, Indonesian, and Hula speakers have about their own languages.

In place of the kind of intuitive information which native speakers of a language can provide, we must look at examples of the language which were produced by these speakers at the time the languages were still used. In the case of Greek, enormous amounts of material are available, and scholars can provide a very great service by finding examples of how the Greek words were used in a variety of different kinds of text. In this way, we can begin to get a feeling for the range of meaning of the different Greek words, and the differences between closely related words. However, scholars are still dependent on the examples that are available, and there is no way to be sure, for example, that every word that the Greeks used for different types of cutting is actually to be found in the Greek texts that are available today. Some words may have been used in speaking, but no one ever had a reason to use them in writing. In other words, we can never be sure that we know all of the words in any particular Greek semantic domain.

Turning to Biblical Hebrew, the problems are much more severe. The reason for this is that the material included in the Old Testament is almost the only material available in Biblical Hebrew. Even some parts of the Old Testament are written in a different language, Aramaic, rather than Hebrew. Most of the non-biblical writing from the Bible era is also written in Aramaic. There is almost nothing in Hebrew itself which can provide extra information about the meanings of the words found in the Bible.

The main exception to this is the non-biblical material found at Qumran, much of which is in Hebrew. While some of this material was certainly written at a time fairly close to the time when the Bible texts were written, much of it is nevertheless from a period later than the Bible texts, and this means that we cannot be sure that it fully represents Biblical Hebrew. This is especially true because it is not clear to what extent Hebrew was still a widely spoken language at that time.

To some extent archaeological discoveries, including both objects and art, can help us to have a clearer picture of the world of the Bible. In particular, we can often assume that there must have been words for the particular objects that are found or that can be seen in the artworks. However, in terms of language, this is quite limited help, unless there is some accompanying text to help us know what words were actually used for those things.

5.7 Semantic Domain Lexicons

The United Bible Societies has published the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, edited by Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida. This important work provides a lot of useful semantic information about New Testament Greek. However, in terms of the procedure outlined above, this Lexicon does not in fact go very far.

What the Lexicon does is to gather together groups of words under various headings, such as "parts and areas of a building" or "supernatural powers" or "to intend, to purpose, to plan". In each of these groups, the different Greek words are listed, together with explanations of their meaning. This is of course very useful as far as it goes, but there are at least two ways in which this Lexicon does not provide all the information one would like. First, the headings which have been chosen were chosen logically. The words which are grouped together in each case are not necessarily words which speakers of Greek would have felt belonged together in a domain.

The second problem with the Lexicon is that steps 2 to 4 of the procedure suggested above have not usually been done for the domains that have been identified. The words are listed together in the Lexicon, but in most cases no information is given to us as to what are the important categories of meaning that would help to organize these domains for Greek speakers, or what are the key components of meaning which would distinguish each word from the others.

As for the Old Testament, work is now being done by a team of scholars, using a model developed by Reinier de Blois. It is hoped that this will eventually lead to a Semantic Domain Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew which will bring us farther along the road than the Greek Lexicon does. Of course the Old Testament is very long, and there are many examples of how some terms are used. But there are also many words that occur only once, and there must have been many other words in regular use that never appear in the Bible at all. So this type of study must be done in full recognition of these limitations.

The materials that are available at the moment do not provide all of the information that we would like to have. Nevertheless, it should still be clear that this type of information would be extremely valuable, not only for Bible translators, but also for anyone who wants to understand the meaning of the Bible texts. This is a field that is open for new contributions to be made. Anyone who is interested and finds this topic challenging should seriously consider whether they might be able to contribute some research that would be valuable for students of the Bible all over the world.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT SIX

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Discourse Analysis

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 What is a discourse?

A discourse is a coherent stretch of language composed of parts that are related to one another. Discourse ordinarily involves at least two people, the speaker and hearer, or the writer and reader. It makes use of a variety of rhetorical devices found in a particular language. To engage in discourse analysis, is to examine the way a discourse is organized by studying the sequence of paragraphs and sentences and the way they are connected to one another.

Although a discourse *may* consist of only one sentence or a part of a sentence, normally it will have many such parts. And there are important differences between a discourse and a sentence. When we look at an individual sentence, our concern is more with its grammatical form. In looking at the full discourse, however, we study the way sentences are related to each other and the role each sentence plays in the total discourse. Thus when a Bible translator studies a text, it is important to begin by analyzing the entire discourse, rather than each individual sentence.

6.1.2 Discourse comprehension

In discourse analysis, we assume that a speaker uses language because he has something to say and wants to be understood. Therefore, he employs every means possible to fulfill his goal of communication. When producing a discourse, the language user uses certain strategies for effective communication. The question in the mind of the speaker or writer is: What can I do to make my point understood? Discourse *analysis* attempts to uncover the strategies employed.

There are two features of human communication that help a listener or reader comprehend a discourse. The first is the availability of background knowledge. Readers or listeners are able to draw any relevant information from their reserve of general knowledge to provide a framework for understanding a discourse. Speakers and writers know this and make use of it. Background knowledge can include the language user's personal knowledge of people, objects, states of affairs or whatever the discourse is about. So an individual's awareness of what's involved in fishing becomes the basis for understanding a discourse about fishing.

The second feature is known as the "Cooperative Principle". On the basis of this principle, the listeners and readers assumes that speakers and writers are trying to make sense and want to be cooperative, and that they generally do this by being truthful, being clear, saying no more or less than what is meant, and trying to be relevant.

The burden of comprehension is always on the hearer. However, when producing a discourse, the speaker or writer will take account of what the hearer knows to achieve maximum relevance.

6.2 Types of discourse

Traditionally, biblical discourse has been classified into narrative and non-narrative types. The latter can be further divided into other types such as poetry, proverbs, oracle, etc. Discourse studies generally classify discourse into four types: narrative, procedural, hortatory and expository.

A narrative discourse is said to be time-based, relating events as they occur in a real or imagined world. Examples of this include the gospels, which recount the events in the life of Jesus. A procedural text provides instructions on how to perform a task, such as the description of how to

build the ark in Genesis 6.14-16. A hortatory discourse exhorts the listener to adopt a particular behavior. The NT epistles contain many of these. One example is Roman 12. An expository discourse expounds a thesis or point of view, as in an essay or scientific paper. An example is 1 Corinthians 15. However, in a book like the Bible, it is not always easy to make a clear distinction between a hortatory and expository discourse.

It is also possible to classify discourse by means of other features. One such feature is *time orientation*. Narrative, procedural and expository discourses can be either past or non-past. The hortatory is usually non-past. Another feature useful for classification is *person orientation*. Although commonly in the first or third person, the narrative type can also be in the second person. Generally, procedural and hortatory discourses use the second person, and expository discourses the third person. A third feature deals with the way the parts of the discourse are related to one another. In both the narrative and procedural discourse, the events are linked chronologically. In the expository and hortatory, the parts are connected in a way that shows their logical and causal relationship with each other.

Another type of discourse includes texts of what might broadly be termed a “literary genre. For a discussion of this type of text, see the article in this volume on “The Nature of Biblical Material”.

6.3 Discourse markers

As a person uses language, whether spoken or written, he employs a strategy that will enable him to achieve his purpose which is to communicate a message. To accomplish this, the writer uses devices which serve as markers or signposts to signal a significant element or development in the discourse. These elements may include a new turn of events, a new character introduced, a denouement, or the end of the story. Such markers are found in both oral and written discourse but only those found in written discourse will be discussed here.

6.3.1 Use of a full noun¹

In many languages, the use of full nouns, rather than pronouns or affixes, in subject position at the start of a paragraph signals a switch in the discourse.

Most English versions signal a new turn of events in Jeremiah 38.14 by marking it as a new section and by indenting the first sentence.

King Zedekiah sent for the prophet Jeremiah and received him at the third entrance of the temple of the Lord. The king said to Jeremiah, "I have something to ask you; do not hide anything from me." (NRSV)

Note the use of the full name of the King, ‘King Zedekiah’ at the start of the section, and the subsequent reference to him simply as ‘the king’ in the following sentence.

A similar pattern is seen in the following extract, which is taken from a novel, “Murder in Georgetown”:

Potamos and Blackburn slept late Sunday morning, then took a leisurely walk, stopping for the newspaper and a breakfast of Danish and coffee. **They** passed the new Russian embassy...

6.3.2 Conjunctions and other relational words

Another type of discourse marker is what might be called “relational words” - prepositions, conjunctions and other words which serve to link parts of the discourse in particular ways. The function of these words is to show the relationship between words or clauses, so helping to make clear the movement of thought in a discourse. Exegetes are particularly aware of the significance

¹ Markers used in this study are taken from Zogbo, 1987.

of these words. For translators, it is important to pay close attention to those markers in the source and receptor languages that signal specific relationships such as:

reason (because), means (through), elaboration (furthermore), purpose (in order to), consequence (therefore), condition (if), resolution (thus), comparison (as). It may be that in some languages, these markers are not represented by full words but by prefixes or suffixes.

Some languages have very few of these markers so each one has multiple functions:

‘Then’ in English can mark either a simple sequence of events or a concluding or summarizing remark of the whole discourse.

When a preacher likes to give long sermons, the audience cannot wait to hear the words, “finally”, “to summarize” or “lastly”. In the Philippines, a cohortative statement with a marker indicating consequence such as, “Let us therefore...” often marks the end of a sermon.

6.3.3 Background and foreground

Another type of marker distinguishes the more important from the less important part of a discourse. In Swahili, this is marked by the use of the infix [ka] for the essential part, and [ki] for what is not crucial to the story. Together with this, the foreground event is in the perfective aspect while the background is in the imperfect. Tagalog uses topicalization, that is, marking one part of the sentence as the topic by bringing it to the beginning of the sentence. Information that is topicalized like this is foregrounded. Information that occurs in its normal place in the sentence is relatively backgrounded. The first three sentences in Tagalog show that the predicate or the new information is usually at the beginning of the sentence (foreground), followed by the old information (background). In the last one, however, the old information ‘ang babae’ is topicalized by bringing it to the initial position in the sentence.²

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| (1) | Mahirap ang magtanim sa bukid.
Difficult art to plant at field | “It is difficult to plant on the field.” |
| (2) | Kararating lang ng mag-asawa.
Just arrived part marker couple | “The couple have just returned.” |
| (3) | Pagod ang babae.
Tired art woman | “The woman is tired.” |
| (4) | Ang babae, pagod na siya.
The woman junc tired asp she | “The woman, she is already tired.” |

6.4 Cohesion

Cohesion is an important goal of any discourse. A cohesive relation exists when the interpretation of one element in the discourse depends on that of another, for example as the connection between a pronoun and its antecedent noun. The clearer the links between its many elements, the more cohesive the discourse is. These many interrelated links reinforce the fact that the discourse is a single unit of communication.

6.4.1 Means to achieve cohesion

The discourse markers discussed in Section 6.3 signal places in the text where significant breaks or turning points in the discourse are found. Another important discourse mechanism is the means by which cohesion is achieved. These include **reference**, **substitution**, **ellipsis** and **lexical cohesion**.

² Abbreviations: art – article; part – particle; junc - juncture

In every text, there is old and new information and one way to distinguish them is by different kinds of **reference**. In a discourse, once something has been introduced, it is no longer new information and therefore the appropriate way to refer to it changes.

In English and in many other languages, one way to indicate that a participant is being introduced for the first time is the use of an indefinite marker.

Thus in English, the use of ‘a’ or ‘an’. English: A man came.

And when the noun ‘man’ is referred to again, reference changes to ‘the man’ or ‘this man’

The man’s name is John. Or This man’s name is John.

In Luke 19.2, there is reference first to ‘a man’ prior to this man being named as Zacchaeus. And after the initial reference is established, a pronoun is used to refer to Zacchaeus. Note the progression in reference from Luke 19.2-3:

And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. ³ And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. (NRSV)

One will note, however, that the problem here is that it is not clear whether the final “he” refers to Jesus or Zacchaeus!

Another means of achieving cohesion is by **substitution**. When referring to something that has already been mentioned, substitutes can be used such as pronouns, definite articles or demonstratives. These are words or grammatical forms that substitute for other words in the preceding context. The form that was replaced by the substitute is called the antecedent. Substitution not only avoids repetition, but also more importantly shows the close connection between two elements. Languages with grammatical gender such as Hebrew, Greek and English make it easier to identify what the antecedent is. Cohesion lies in the continuity of reference whereby an element enters into the discourse a second time, referring to something earlier in the discourse. This is called an “anaphora” or an “anaphoric reference”.

The most important consideration in adjusting to the substitution patterns of the receptor language is the need to avoid leaving antecedents ambiguous. Receptor languages may have different ways to ensure clarity of reference. Grammatical gender in English is useful in this regard. However, consider:

2 Kings 19.35

KJV *And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred fourscore and 5,000; and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.*

Who arose early in the morning? Who were dead corpses? The antecedents of the pronouns are ambiguous.

One commentary explains that the pronoun in the phrase, ‘they arose early in the morning’ refers to those who were not among those killed, including the king, since those who got up and those killed could not possibly refer to the same people. Unfortunately in this verse, it is difficult to be sure to whom “they” refers, since the corpses and those who got up are both masculine plural forms. Had one of the antecedents been a feminine form, reference would be clearer. See how different versions have dealt with this problem:

TEV *That night an angel of the Lord went to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 soldiers. At dawn the next day, there they lay, all dead.*

NJB *In the early morning when it was time to get up, there they lay, so many corpses.*

NRSV *...when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies.*

Tanakh *... and the following morning they were all dead corpses.*

Ellipsis is a kind of anaphora in which the reader is expected to ‘fill in the blanks’ or complete the thought implied in the sentence. The missing part creates cohesion because the reader thinks of the implied antecedent.

Philippians 1.15

RSV *Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.*

TEV *Some of them preach Christ because they are jealous and quarrelsome, but others preach him with all goodwill.*

In RSV, the verb phrase ‘preach Christ’ is referred to in the second clause by ellipsis; in TEV, ‘him’ is substituted for Christ.

Some languages favor the use of **overlap** in showing transition as in the following example:

John and Bill went to town. When they got to the town, they went to the shore. Having gone to the shore, they bought some wood.

This is almost the opposite of ellipsis, being very repetitious, although it is the repetition that provides cohesion.

Lexical cohesion refers to the unity achieved by the relatedness of the vocabulary that is used. Words are chosen to reinforce the oneness of thought through reiteration or proper collocation.

The terms, ‘salary’ and ‘stipend’ both fall under the category of ‘payment’. However, cohesion is achieved if ‘salary’ is used with the ‘employee’ and ‘stipend’ with ‘student’ because this has been the usual association, or collocation, of these terms (at least in American English), as seen in the following sentence.

The employee got his salary on time but the student’s stipend is already a month late.

The word ‘expire’ is only one of several possible ways to refer to death. Other common expressions are: “pass away,” “to be with the Lord,” “kick the bucket,” or simply, “die.” A minister may talk about someone ‘being with the Lord’ but a doctor may view the process in more clinical terms, as in the following example:

The doctor said that the patient expired on the operating table.

6.5 Conclusion

In Bible translation, the translator must first understand the source text. This includes the need to uncover the strategies employed by the author, to help the reader understand the message. The signposts or discourse markers used by the author will show how the discourse has been organized.

In reproducing the message for the receptors, every translator needs first to know the discourse features of the receptor language. In the case of many translators who are effective communicators in their own languages, this knowledge may be largely intuitive, but the process of Bible translation requires that this intuitive knowledge be brought to the surface so as to consciously be a part of the translator's set of skills.

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

SECTION THREE – BIBLICAL STUDIES

UNIT SEVEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

How the Bible Came To Us

This unit is intended to help translators to become familiar with the background and circumstances in which biblical stories were created, developed and preserved. Such a study is necessary because the world of the Bible is so far remote from us today. Translators come from different backgrounds, and some do not have theological training. This study has been prepared with this situation in view.

7.1 Introduction: Bible, Testament and Scripture

The Bible is the word of God. God has disclosed himself to people throughout history. On their part, human beings throughout history have responded to God's disclosure of himself in a variety of ways. The Bible is a record of such interaction between God and those he called to be his people.

The word "Bible" comes to us from Greek (via Latin), being derived from the words *biblion* or *biblos*, both of which mean book. The word *biblion* is used mostly when referring to a book or scroll, like a scroll of the Law. The word *biblos* is used especially when referring to a sacred or venerable book. The word may have been derived from the name of a town, Byblos, located north of Beirut on the Lebanese coast and known today as Jebail. This town was an important centre for the production of papyrus, which was used as a writing material in ancient times.

In the New Testament the collection of written documents now known as the Old Testament, are often called as "the writings" or "the Scriptures" (Mt. 21:42; Mk 12:10; 2 Tim. 3:16). Chrysostom, one of the Church Fathers in the fourth century, is said to have been the first to apply the word *biblos* to the books of the Bible. In English, the word "Bible" was first used by Chaucer to refer to any book, but John Purvey used it to refer to "the Bible later translated" or the Scripture. Jews and Christians use the word "Bible" to refer to a collection of books considered by them as normative and authoritative both for their individual and communal growth. The Hebrew Bible contains all the thirty-nine books known among Protestant Christians as the Old Testament. Among Christians, the Protestant Bible has sixty-six books (39 OT+27 NT), while the Catholic Bible and also the Orthodox Bible have more books.

The word "Testament," traditionally used to refer to the two parts of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament, corresponds to the Greek *diathēkē* and the Latin *testamentum*. In contemporary English, a "covenant" involves an agreement between two parties, and a "testament" is a declaration of a person's last wishes (their "will") or, more rarely, something which witnesses to something else. As it is used in the Greek Bible, the word *diathēkē* usually means "covenant" or "agreement" and only rarely "testament" (e.g. Heb 9:16). Thus the "Old Testament" refers to the old covenant, and the "New Testament" refers to the new covenant.

At first the only Scriptures of the early Christians were the books now known as the Old Testament. Later the Gospels, and the writings of Paul and other disciples of Jesus began to be read and respected alongside the Old Testament. It was not until the 4th century AD that the precise list of 27 books that we know as the New Testament was clearly defined. The books of the Bible are of different forms, such as, law, history, story, prophecy, poetry, dreams and visions, teachings, parables, letters, and so forth.

7.2 Contents of the Old Testament

The Old Testament or the Hebrew Bible traditionally had three divisions: (1) the Law (Hebrew *Torah*), (2) the Prophets (*Nebi'im*), (3) the Writings (*Kethubim*). More commonly today the books are grouped somewhat differently into four groups: Law, Historical Books, Prophets, and Poetry and Wisdom literature.

7.2.1 Divisions of the Hebrew Bible

The Law or Torah. The Law or *Torah* refers to the first five books, namely, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. For centuries traditions now contained in the first five books were collected, preserved and passed on from one generation to another. Traditionally, all five books were attributed to Moses because he was the receiver of the Law at Sinai, and the first to have been commanded by God to put something in writing. They are thus called the “Law of Moses”, Genesis sometime being referred to as the First Book of Moses, Exodus as the Second Book of Moses, and so on. While the earliest written traditions may go back to this period, the books were collected and edited over a long period of time, coming to their present form during and just after the exile (around the 5th century BC). In Greek these books are together called “*Pentateuch*,” meaning “five volumes.”

The Prophets. Traditionally, the Prophets or *Nebi'im* fell into two groups, the “Former Prophets,” and the “Latter Prophets.” The “Former Prophets” included Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings, while the “Latter Prophets” consisted of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel (the “major prophets”) and “The Book of the Twelve”, containing all twelve minor prophets in one scroll.

The Writings. The *Kethubim*, in the Hebrew Bible, include historical books like Ruth, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, as well as Daniel, and the poetic and wisdom literature of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes Song of Songs and Lamentations.

7.2.2 Divisions in the Christian Old Testament

Law. This is the same as the Hebrew Torah.

Historical Books. These include all the books from Joshua through to Esther.

They present a continuous history of Israel from the time of the conquest of Canaan down to the fall of the Southern Kingdom (Judah), some stories from the period of the exile itself, and then the beginnings of the return from exile and the resettlement of the land of Israel.

Poetry and Wisdom. These books are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations.

Prophetic Books. These include the four major prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets from Hosea through to Malachi.

7.3 Content of the New Testament.

The New Testament is comprised of three types of writings: Gospels and Acts; Letters or Epistles; and Apocalypse.

7.3.1 Gospels and Acts.

For several decades, stories about the birth, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus were circulated and preserved in the form of oral tradition. We cannot ascertain when exactly the process of putting those stories into writing began. Many scholars believe that one document that has come to be known as Q (from the German word *Quelle* meaning “source”) was one of the earliest writings about Jesus, mainly consisting of collections of his teachings, but this document no longer exists. The Gospel of Mark is probably the earliest among the Gospels, written some time in the late 60s, a few years before the fall of Jerusalem in 72 B.C. Scholars maintain that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are said to have depended upon Q and Mark as their sources. These three Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are known as the Synoptic Gospels, because they give a largely similar overview (or *synopsis*) of the life of Jesus. John’s Gospel, on the other hand, is different both in its narrative framework and in the type and extent of teaching recorded.

7.3.2 Letters or Epistles.

These are letters written by prominent Christians to specific churches, to Christians in general, and to individuals. The largest group of these are called the Pauline Epistles. Some of Paul's letters (such as Galatians and 1 Thessalonians) were the earliest written materials of the New Testament. They were mostly written to specific churches and addressed to specific problems. Paul was an apostle called by Christ to proclaim the Good News to the Gentile world. He wrote the Letters to strengthen the members of the churches, most of which he founded. It may be noted that some Letters ascribed to Paul may not have come from him directly. Paul was not the only apostle who maintained close contact with the new believers and the churches. We have other letters or epistles, sometimes known as the General Epistles because less is known about their destinations: Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, and Jude.

7.3.3 Apocalypse.

The last book in the New Testament, the book of Revelation, is an apocalypse. It is an account of Christ's revelation to John. Vision is the main feature of this book.

7.4 Canon.

"Canon" is a Greek word with Semitic origin (Hebrew *qaneh*, Assyrian *qanû*). From this word come the Greek word *kanna* or *kane*, Latin *canna*, and English *cane*. Its original meaning is "reed," often used by carpenters as a ruler or measuring stick, and from this the word comes to mean "ruler," or "standard." In biblical scholarship the word "canon" is metaphorically used to refer to a list of books considered or accepted as authoritative scriptures by Jews and Christians. Such books are sometimes referred to as canonical books as opposed to those books that are not considered authoritative and are thus non-canonical. The first who used the word "canon" in this sense was bishop Athanasius of Alexandria in A.D. 350.

7.4.1 Canon of the Old Testament.

The writing of the books and their acceptance as Scriptures are two separate matters. It is generally accepted that most of the biblical book went through different stages of development before they reached their final form and gained acceptance into the canon. These stages are composition, circulation, revision, inclusion into a collection of other books, and acceptance into the canon.

We do not have traditions that would provide information on exactly how the canon of the Hebrew Bible was fixed, and how the books were arranged in the order they now appear. We can, however, ascertain that it was through a long process of careful examination, consideration, and discussion by the religious community, that the decision was made as to which of the books were to be considered as authoritative for the community. By about 400 B.C., the Five Books of Moses had been recognized as the standard body of authoritative Scripture for the Jews. Some time in the third century B.C., the books of the Prophets were accepted into the canon. By the early years of the second century the process of giving official recognition to the above books or groups of books was completed. Discussion continued for some time regarding the status of some of the books such as Ecclesiastes, Esther, and the Song of Solomon, but by the first century A.D., the third section, the Writings, had been included in the canon. It is not clear at what stage the books were arranged in the present order. Some scholars have speculated that it either follows a rabbinic tradition or a system of classification and cataloguing used by libraries and schools of Palestine at that time. It should be noted that in the Septuagint (referred to as LXX), that is the Greek Old Testament, the books appear in a different order.

The LXX contains additional books, which are not found in the Hebrew Bible, widely known today as "deuterocanonical" (meaning, belonging to a second canon). For this reason we have two types of Old Testament canon. The Protestant canon includes only the 39 books found in the Hebrew Bible, and is the same as the Jewish canon. The Catholic and Orthodox communions, however, recognize the LXX canon, and thus include the deuterocanonical books. The precise set of deuterocanonical books included varies between confessional communities.

7.4.2 Canon of the New Testament.

It is not easy to trace when the books of the New Testament came to be used as Scriptures. We can ascertain through the report of Justin Martyr that by the middle of the second century A. D. the Gospels and Letters were read in Christian worship along with the Jewish scriptures (Old Testament).

In the closing years of the first century A. D. and the beginning of the second century, the church had already begun to collect different writings, thus giving them normative recognition. It took some time for the written Gospels to replace the oral tradition. For decades the two traditions must have been used side by side. Finally, during the first half of the second century writers started quoting from the written Gospels, as we see in 2 Clement (ca. A.D. 140), and in the works of Justin Martyr (ca. A.D. 150). With the collection of different writings, the seed of the canon of the New Testament was sown.

At first, in addition to the Old Testament books, the Church officially recognized the four Gospels and ten Pauline Letters as normative for Christians. By the end of the fourth century the list of books was completed and the canon of the New Testament was finally closed. In the West, the canon was officially adopted at the Synod of Rome in 382 A. D., which was symbolically confirmed by a papal declaration in 405 A. D. In the East, the canon was adopted at the Synods of Hippo Regius (393 A. D.) and Carthage (397 A. D.), with questions left regarding the status of the books of Hebrews, James and Jude. Final adoption was made at Carthage in 419 A. D. With its canonization, the New Testament became the second part of the Christian Bible.

7.5 The Nature of Biblical Texts.

7.5.1 Studying the Texts of the Bible

As we know, the Old Testament and New Testaments were originally written in Hebrew and in Greek respectively. Biblical Hebrew and Greek are no longer used today, and are considered as “dead languages.”

One of the major tasks biblical scholars have been engaged in is to trace the history and development of the biblical text. It contains literature written over a thousand-year period, which makes it very difficult to reconstruct exactly how the text developed. And what happened to the text in the intervening years remains largely unknown to modern scholars.

People who study the text are known as textual critics. They follow at least three broad steps. First, they collect, collate and preserve the manuscripts. Secondly, they develop principles for evaluating the various variant readings in order to reconstruct what might most accurately represent the original texts. Since these manuscripts have been copied and prepared over a long period of time there are always differences between the available manuscripts of any one book. Thirdly, they also try to trace the history of how the text was handed down and factors that may have caused changes to the text.

7.5.2 Early Writing Materials.

Stone Tablets. The earliest writing was in the form of inscriptions on stone or clay tablets, or on fragments of clay pottery.

Papyrus. Next came a kind of paper made of papyrus, an aquatic plant or water reed found in certain areas of West Asia and Northern Africa. This plant grew in marshy areas and lakes, and was very common in Egypt, especially in the delta area. To prepare papyrus paper, the stem of the reed is first split into small thin strips. These strips are laid side by side, overlapping each other, on a hard surface, and another layer of strips is then placed on top, at right angles to the first layer. The two layers are strenuously beaten together, expressing the gum that is in the plant, which seals the fibre strips together into a single fabric that can be folded or rolled. Several of these can be joined to make a long scroll used for writing. Papyrus is known to have been in use

as early as the third millennium B.C. in Egypt, and was still used during the times that the Old Testament was being written. One disadvantage with the papyrus scrolls was that they were difficult to write on. Also, they did not last very long, and not many papyrus manuscripts have survived.

Leather. The more durable writing material was fine leather made out of tanned animal skins, either of cattle or sheep or goats, preferably young animals. As the Dead Sea Scrolls clearly indicate, most of the biblical books were written and preserved on leather. Several pieces of leather were joined together to form a scroll. Readers had to roll the scroll open for reading and roll it back when finished. These are also preserved in the form of codices, that is, pages of leather bound together.

Paper. Paper was invented in China in as early as the first century A.D. It was brought to Palestine in the eighth century by some prisoners of war, and from there to Europe. Its use, however, did not gain much popularity in Palestine until the invention of printing. The first printed edition of a complete Hebrew Bible was published in A.D. 1488

7.5.3 Early Hebrew Manuscripts.

The preservation and transmission of the manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible was the work of important groups of Jewish scribes called the Masoretes of Tiberias. Tiberias is a town located on the shore of Galilee. The name Masoretes is derived from the *Masora*, a traditional body of scholarship relating to correct reading of the text of the Old Testament. Until the time of the Masoretes the text of the Hebrew Bible was written only with consonants. The Masoretes invented vowel signs and added them above and below the consonants, thus not disturbing the arrangement of the consonantal text (which was considered to be fixed). Inserting vowel signs made reading easier and more accurate, especially since Biblical Hebrew was by now a “dead” language. Among the Masoretes who worked at Tiberias, Ben Asher and his family played a very important role. The Masoretic Text (MT) we use today was mainly their contribution. The work of this family went on for about one and a half centuries, from the middle of the eighth century to the tenth century. The works of the Masoretes were preserved in several codices. *Codex Cairensis*, considered to be the oldest among the Masoretic manuscripts, is attributed to Moses Ben Asher, and dates back to A.D. 850. It contains the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings (known as the Former Prophets), and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets (known as the latter Prophets). *Codex Aleppo*, another manuscript also attributed to the Ben Asher family, contains all the books of the Old Testament, and dates back to about A.D. 950. Another important manuscript is *Codex Leningradensis*, which is very close to the above two *Codices*, and is now kept in the Leningrad Public Library. This too dates back to A.D. 1008 and was a copy of Ben Asher’s work. Because the earlier *Codices* were not available to scholars, the Hebrew Text we have today was based on *Codex Leningradensis*.

7.5.4 Editions of the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible widely used by scholars today is the *Biblia Hebraica* (BH). The first edition was prepared by Rudolf Kittel who based on the Rabbbinic Bible of Ben Chayyim (1524-25) (check date of first edition). The third edition of BH came out in 1937, and depended heavily on the *Codex Leningradensis*. This is the oldest codex that contains all the books of the Hebrew Bible. A more recent edition of the Hebrew Bible, a revised edition of the 1937 BH, is still based on the Leningrad Codex but renamed *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS). There was another codex containing the Hebrew text, the *Codex Aleppo* dated from the tenth century A.D. At the time BH and BHS were edited this codex was not available for public use. In fact, during the Arab-Israeli war in 1949 it was thought to have been lost. Ten years later, however, this codex was recovered in Jerusalem, but unfortunately one-fourth of it has been burned. Currently, a project is underway at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, where scholars are working on a new edition of the Hebrew Bible based on the Aleppo codex.

A brief note on the side-notes and footnotes found in the pages of the BHS. Here and there the Masoretes came across places in the manuscripts where the texts were corrupt, and which could

lead to some misunderstanding. There were about 1,300 such places. To avoid changing the text, they wrote in the margin what they thought would have been the intended reading (*Qere*), to correct what was written in the text (*Kethib*). These notes are very important to textual critics. In only about eighteen places, the Masoretes inserted corrections in the text itself, and these are called *tiqqune sopherim*.

MT and LXX. As mentioned earlier, besides the Hebrew or Masoretic Text, there is also a Greek Text of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint or LXX. The difference between the MT and the LXX has led scholars to assume that there must have been another Hebrew text upon which the LXX was based. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls at Wadi Qumran between 1947 and 1961 has revolutionized biblical textual research. One important outcome of research on the Dead Sea Scrolls is that they largely confirm the reliability of the MT. In addition to the manuscripts in Hebrew, translated materials in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin were also discovered. These secondary materials, though limited, are evidence of different early texts of the Hebrew Bible.

7.5.5 The New Testament.

Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Eastern Mediterranean world during the New Testament period, although Latin was the official language of the Roman Empire. The first Christians used the Greek Septuagint as their scripture. It was natural that writers of the New Testament used Greek, the common language of the people. When the NT writers quote from the Old Testament they often quote from the LXX.

The First Printed NT. We owe the first printed edition of the Greek New Testament to Erasmus, a Dutch scholar, who compiled a text based on the limited set of manuscripts available to him at the time. It was published in 1546. Later editions of this text became known as the *Textus Receptus*.

Early NT Manuscripts. The earliest manuscripts were written in capital letters or uncials, but these were gradually replaced by cursive letters or minuscules. There were also copies of translations into other languages, such as Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic and Armenian. Erasmus based his New Testament on later manuscripts written in cursive letters. The discovery of older manuscripts, some dating back to the fourth and fifth centuries, benefited later scholars especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There are significant textual differences between these texts and the *Textus Receptus*. Some of the early manuscripts are –

Codex Vaticanus - kept at the Vatican Library since at least 1475. This codex is from the fourth century A. D. and contains the entire Bible with some missing portions here and there. It is the oldest and best of all the Greek Old Testament manuscripts available.

Codex Sinaiticus - found at St. Catherine's Monastery at Mt. Sinai. This codex too is from the fourth century A. D. According to the story, Konstantin von Tischendorf, a German, witnessed the monks at St. Catherine lighting their fire with parchment leaves. In 1859 he returned to St. Catherine and discovered an almost complete Manuscript of the Greek Bible. He managed to secure the book which he later presented to the Czar of Russia. It was purchased by the British Museum in 1933. In addition to the books of the Bible, it also includes the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Thomas.

Codex Alexandrinus - from the fifth century, presented to King Charles I of England by the Patriarch of Constantinople in 1627. It contains the whole Bible, and also the Psalms of Solomon and 1 and 2 Clement. It is now preserved at the British Museum in London.

Codex Ephraemi, also from the fifth century. Originally it probably contained the entire Bible, but much of it is now missing.

Codex Bezae, written in both Greek and Latin, contains only the four Gospels and Acts.

Codex Washingtonianus kept at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. This codex dates from the fifth century, and contains the four Gospels.

There are also many later manuscripts in minuscule or cursive writing, written on parchment from the ninth century onward. As mentioned earlier, the earliest manuscripts were written on papyrus, but only few of those have been recovered. The great majority of the manuscripts that have been discovered were written on parchment. About eighty-four uncial papyrus manuscripts have been recovered, but most of them only in fragments. The majority of ancient New Testament manuscripts that we possess today are minuscule manuscripts - at least 2, 800 of them (dating from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries). Altogether at least five thousand Greek manuscripts are available now.

Modern NT Texts. Today, two popular New Testament Greek texts are available, which are the result of nineteenth and twentieth century scholars' collation and comparison of all the manuscripts available, in order to determine what was most likely the original text. These are the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, and the UBS text known as *The Greek New Testament*.

Novum Testamentum Graece. Eberhard Nestle published an edition of the Greek New Testament in 1898. This text was later corrected by his son Erwin Nestle and Kurt Aland and it is now commonly known as the Nestle-Aland Text. The 27th edition came out in 1993 and is often referred to in shorthand as NA27.

The Greek New Testament. This text was originally prepared by the United Bible Societies for translators. Its fourth edition, published in 1993, is sometimes abbreviated as GNT4.

The NA27 and GNT4 texts have the same Greek text. They differ only in the critical apparatus. The UBS text limits the critical apparatus only to those differences that affect translation, and in those instances it gives more detailed information than the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, as well as an estimate of the degree of certainty associated with the chosen reading.

7.6 Translations of the Bible

Today the Bible is available in more than two thousand languages. Bible translation has a long history and, in fact, is older than Christianity itself. In modern times, mission and Bible translation go hand in hand.

7.6.1 Ancient Translations of the Old Testament

Hebrew-related Languages. The Samaritan Pentateuch, though not a translation because it is written in Hebrew, should perhaps be mentioned here. The Jewish-Samaritan conflict in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. resulted in the Samaritans becoming a separate sect in Judaism. They produced the Samaritan Pentateuch. It contains, as the name suggests, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, traditionally considered as the five books of Moses. The Samaritan Pentateuch is important to scholars who study the Hebrew Text. It differs with the MT in some 6,000 places, many of which are insignificant.

The Old Testament was also translated into Aramaic, another Semitic language very close to Hebrew. This was done after the exile in Babylon when most of the Jews had learned Aramaic, a language that gradually replaced Hebrew as a spoken language. After the exile when the Hebrew Bible was read out in public it was then translated orally into Aramaic, and often with comments or explanations added. Eventually, the Aramaic translations were written down, and these are now known as *Targums*. The *Targums* are not literally "translations," for they contain comments and even interpretations.

Early Translations in Other Languages

The Septuagint (LXX). According to a Letter of Aristeas there is an ancient tradition that Ptolemy II of Alexandria (285-246) saw the need for having the Bible in Greek, the language used by the Jews in dispersion in the Greek-speaking world, especially those living in Egypt. At his request, seventy-two Jewish scholars (translators) were sent from Jerusalem. This tradition says that each

of the seventy-two men was given the same Hebrew text, that each of them worked independently for seventy-two days, and that in the end they produced exactly the same Greek translation. Whatever the truth of this tradition, a Greek translation was done in Egypt in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. This Greek version is known as the Septuagint or LXX, named after the seventy-two translators mentioned in the tradition. It is the “first” translation of the complete Hebrew Scriptures. In addition to the books found in the Hebrew Bible, the LXX includes other books as well, which were written in Greek.

Differences between Masoretic Text and Septuagint. There are some significant differences between the MT and the LXX, and this has led scholars to conclude that the LXX was based on some Hebrew text other than the MT. During the Hellenistic period, many Jews were not happy with the LXX, mainly on the ground that it differs from the Hebrew Text. They were also unhappy with it because the LXX was so extensively used by Christians. For Christians, of course, the LXX was a natural choice, as Greek was the main language they used. The attitude of the Jews led to revisions of the LXX to bring it in the line with the Hebrew text. There were Jews, however, following Philo, who considered the translators of the LXX as themselves inspired and accepted it as equal with the Hebrew Text. These two conflicting attitudes to the LXX were carried over into the Christian era.

Other Greek Translations. There were also other Greek translations made in the second century A.D., but only a few of them survived. Prominent among the Greek translations, though surviving only in fragments, were those of Aquila, Theodotion, and Symmachus. Among some Greek-speaking Jews, these versions, notably that of Aquila, were preferred to the LXX.

Syriac. In the first and second centuries A.D., different books of the Old Testament were translated into Syriac, a dialect of Aramaic. In the fourth and fifth centuries more Syriac translations were produced. Among them the Peshitta (meaning “simple”) was the most popular. There are indications that the Hebrew text was used, but here and there translators followed the LXX. The Peshitta became the official Bible of the Syriac churches.

Latin. In the second century A.D. the Hebrew Bible was also translated into Latin. These “Old Latin” translations were based on the LXX. Commissioned by the Pope, Jerome produced the Bible in standard Latin in the fourth century, popularly known as the Vulgate. At first he used the Greek Bible, but later he became convinced that the translation of the Old Testament should be from the Hebrew Bible. The Vulgate soon replaced the Old Latin and became the standard Bible for the Western Church.

Later Translations. The work of translation did not stop there. As the Christian faith expanded to other people, there was a need to translate the Bible into other languages. All the above versions, namely, the LXX, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate became the sources for subsequent translations. Translations such as the Old Latin, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Syriac, Arabic, and Slavonic were based on the LXX. Other translations, like Persian, were based on the Peshitta. The Vulgate was widely used by translators of the early versions in some major European languages like Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

7.6.2 Early Translations of the New Testament.

Translations of the New Testament followed that of the Old Testament and by the end of the second century A. D., the Syriac and Old Latin versions were completed. The earliest Syriac translation was by Tatian in about the year A.D.160. It combined the four gospels into a single story and is called the Diatessaron or Gospel Harmony. It was popular for some time, but was replaced by another translation done in the latter part of the second century and early third century. When the standard Syriac translation, the Peshitta, came out in the beginning of the fifth century, it replaced the earlier translations and became the official Bible of the Syriac-speaking churches. It should be mentioned that 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation were not part of

the Syriac canon, so these books were not in the Peshitta. Subsequent revisions of the Syriac New Testament were carried out, but the Peshitta remained the official version.

The first Old Latin translation was carried out in North Africa in the second half of the second century. It went through a series of revisions, and Jerome's revision, the Vulgate, was completed in the years A.D. 390-405. By the fifth century the New Testament had also been translated into Armenian and Georgian. Subsequently, the New Testament was translated into many other ancient languages such as Coptic, Gothic, Ethiopic, and Slavonic.

7.7 The Deuterocanon.

Besides the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon, there are additional books accepted as Scripture by the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions. These are mostly found in the LXX and not in the MT. These additional books are variously known as "the apocrypha" (meaning "hidden") or "the deuterocanon" (or second canon). Books included in the Roman Catholic, and the Russian and Greek Orthodox canons are: Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus), Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees, as well as additions to the book of Esther, the Letter of Jeremiah, and additions to the book of Daniel known as The Prayer of Azariah and The Song of the Three Young Men, Susannah, and Bel and the Dragon. The Greek and Russian Orthodox churches also recognize the following as Deuterocanonical Scriptures: 1 Esdras, The Prayer of Manasseh, Psalm 151 and 3 Maccabees. The Slavonic Bible (the basis for the Russian Orthodox canon) includes 2 Esdras, and the Greek Orthodox Bible includes 4 Maccabees as an Appendix. The Latin Vulgate Bible contains 1 & 2 Esdras and the Prayer of Manasseh in an Appendix.

During the Reformation, Martin Luther did not regard these additional books as Scripture but he included them in his translation of the Bible into German and commended them for private reading

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[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT EIGHT

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Causes of Textual Variants

8.1 Introductory remarks

Many English versions of the Bible carry footnote markers such as *a, b, c, d* and so on. When we refer to the footnote we find comments such as, *Gk: Hebrew lacks ..., Hebrew reads ..., Syr Compare Vg: Heb ..., the meaning of the word ... is unknown, another reading is ..., other ancient Mss ..., Hebrew unclear* and so on. These notes often refer to different readings of the same text found in different biblical manuscripts. There are hundreds of Old Testament manuscripts and thousands of New Testament manuscripts. These different readings are what we refer to as **textual variants**. Very often readers do not pay much attention to footnotes, but they are very important for exegetes and translators. Over the years textual critics have been working with a huge number of textual variants, and as a result we now understand how such variants can occur and how they affect our reading and understanding of those texts.

In ancient times Biblical manuscripts were preserved only in hand-written forms. As manuscripts were copied and recopied over the centuries, various changes were introduced into the text. There are **unintentional** as well as **intentional** changes.

8.2 Unintentional Changes or Variants.

Unintentional variants are basically errors connected with the process of copying and recopying of the texts. Such errors are the result of scribal misreading and miswriting of a text. Inadvertently a word or group of words may be omitted or repeated, or even replaced by similar words. Furthermore, some handwriting may be difficult to read, and in such instances scribes may be compelled to simply guess. Some errors may be due to carelessness on the part of the copyists, either because of fatigue or because they are not familiar with the text. Manuscripts could become illegible as a result of long and constant use, thus making the copyist's task quite difficult. These are just a few of the reasons why unintentional changes found their way into the text.

8.2.1 Misreading the Text.

To misread the text results from an error of sight. This can happen in at least seven different ways.

a) Word Division.

From the 4th to 10th centuries A.D, all Greek New Testament manuscripts were written in uncial script, that is block capital letters without word breaks. To give an idea of what such writing looks like, here is an example from Mark 10:40:

ΤΟΔΕΚΑΘΙΚΑΙΕΚΔΕΞΙΩΝΜΟΥΗΕΞΕΥΩΝΥΜΩΝΟΥΚΕΚΤΙΝΕΜΟΝΔΟΥΝΑΙΑΛΛΟΙΚΗΤΟΙΜΑΤΑΙ. The time came when scribes felt the need to write each word separately, but in doing so they introduced various errors due to wrong division of words. This is how Mark 10:40 reads in GNT4: τὸ δὲ καθίσαι ἐκ δεξιῶν μου ἢ ἐξ εὐωνύμων οὐκ ἔστιν ἐμὸν δοῦναι, ἀλλ' οἷς ἡτοίμασται. RSV translates as "but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

The letters **ΑΛΛΟΙΚ** in the middle of the verse are written ἀλλ οἷς in the GNT4, thus creating a space between **ΑΛΛ** and **ΟΙΚ**, and resulting in a rendering 'but it is for those.' However, one variant reading reads ἀλλοις, with no space between **ΑΛΛ** and **ΟΙΚ**, which produces an English rendering "for others" ("to sit at my right hand or at my left it is not mine to grant; for others it has been prepared").

b) Confusion of Letters.

Some letters look so similar that they can easily be confused. Hebrew letters that are often confused are ד and ר, ב and כ, ה and ח, ו and ת, א and י, ע and ז, ע and נ, and כ and נ. Below are two examples involving ד and ר: the same person called Dodanim (דֹּדָנִים) in Gen 10:4 appears as Rodanim (רֹדָנִים) in 1 Chron 1:7; similarly, רִיפָת (Riphath) in Gen 10:3 is called דִּיפָת (Diphath) in 1 Chron 1:6. Another example is found in Isaiah 9:8 where the word וידעו (and they will know) in the MT becomes ויראו (and they will fear/be afraid) in 1QIsa^a. In 2 Kings 16:6 the MT states that the king of Aram (Syria) recovered Elath. However Elath is a port on the Gulf of Aqabah which was a part of Edom. It had no connection with Syria. The textual problem here arises from the confusion of the letters ד and ר. In Hebrew Syria is אֲרָם (Aram) while Edom is אֲדָם. Because of the geographical problem, many modern translations have Edom in the text while the footnotes say Aram. The surprising thing here is that there is no manuscript evidence for what seems to be the correct text.

ב and כ: in Isaiah 28:21 the MT has the words כהר (as the mountain) and בעמק (as the valley), while 1QIsa^a has בהר (in/against the mountain) and בעמק (in/against the valley) respectively. The only difference in the spelling of these words is the initial ב and כ. Presumably one of these is the correct text in each case and the alternative has come about by misreading.

Similarly in Greek, some letters look very much alike, especially in hand-written forms. There is often confusion between Α and Λ, between Γ, Π, and Τ, between Χ and Ε, Ο, Θ, Φ and Ω, between ΔΔ and Μ, between Δ and Λ, and between ΛΙ and Ν. Let us look at some examples.

Rom 6:5: ΑΛΛΑ (αλλά, but) is read in the variant as ΑΜΑ (αμα, together, at the same time).

1Cor. 13:3: ΚΑΥΧΗΣΩΜΑΙ (καυχῆσμαι “if I deliver my body **that I may glory**”) is written ΚΑΥΘΗΣΩΜΑΙ (καυθήσομαι “if I deliver my body **to be burned**”) in the variant reading. In this case there is confusion between the Χ and Θ, and between the Ω and Ο.

c) Abbreviations.

In the course of writing, individual words in the New Testament manuscripts were regularly abbreviated. Some abbreviations looked very similar to each other and could easily confuse copyists. They included ΘΣ for θεός, ΚΣ for κύριος, ΙΣ for Ιησους, ΟΙΣ for ὁ Ιησοῦς. For example:

Acts 1:3: “To them” (from ΟΙΣ = οἷς) is understood to mean “Jesus” (ΟΙΣ = ὁ Ιησοῦς) in a variant reading.

1Tim 3:16: “Who” (from ΟΣ = ὅς) becomes “God” (from ΘΣ = θεός) in a variant reading.

d) Homoioteleuton (same ending).

Sometimes two words which are identical or which have similar endings occurred side by side or close to each other. In such cases the eye of a scribe or copyist jumped from one word to the next, omitting the word or words in between. The same thing happened when two sentences or lines ended with the same or similar word. The copyist's eye jumped from the end of the first line to the end of the second line, thus omitting all the words in between. This type of omission is known as *homoioteleuton* which is the Greek word for “same ending”.

Isa 4:5, 6

וּבְרָא יְהוָה עַל כָּל-מְכוֹן הַר-צִיּוֹן וְעַל-מִקְרָאָהּ עֲנֹן יוֹמָם [וְעֲשָׂן וְנֶגַהּ אֵשׁ לְהִבָּה לַיְלָה]

כִּי עַל-כָּל-כְּבוֹד חָפָה: 6 וְסָפָה תִּהְיֶה לְצַל-יְיָ [וְיָמָם] וְלִמְסֻתָּו מִזֶּרֶם וּמִמְּטָר:

The words in brackets are missing from Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a), because the scribe's eye passed from יָמָם in verse 5 to יְיָ in verse 6.

In Mat 5:19-21 the Geek text reads

19 ὃς ἐάν οὖν λύσῃ μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων καὶ διδάξῃ οὕτως τοὺς ἄνθρωπους, ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν· ὃς δ' ἂν ποιήσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν. [20 λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσελθῆτε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.]
21 Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις, Οὐ φονεύσεις· ὃς δ' ἂν φονεύσῃ, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει.

“Whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the **kingdom of heaven** (τῶν οὐρανῶν). For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the **kingdom of heaven** (τῶν οὐρανῶν). You have heard that it was said ...” (RSV).

The words in brackets (“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter”) are missing from a variant. The eyes of the copyist must have jumped from τῶν οὐρανῶν at the end of verse 19 to τῶν οὐρανῶν at the end of verse 20, leaving out all the words in between.

Another example is Isa 40:7b-8a, which was omitted from the Qumran Scroll of Isaiah (1QIsa). The omitted text was later copied into the margin of 1QIsa^a.

e) Homoioarcton (same beginning).

In some instances identical or similar letters occur at the beginning of words or sentences or lines, and as a result copyists may omit some letters or words. This is called *homoioarcton*, from the Greek meaning “similar or identical beginning.” An example of this is found in Joshua 21:35-38. The word וּמִמִּטְהָ (‘‘and from the tribe’’) occurs at the beginning of verses 36 and 38. As a result some manuscripts omit verses 36 and 37 entirely, because the eyes of a scribe jumped from the beginning of verse 36 to the beginning of verse 38, omitting the words in between.

f) Haplography (Single writing).

Sometimes letters or words that are identical or almost identical occur side by side or close to each other and were copied once when they should have been copied twice. This type of error is known as *haplography* from the Greek word which means ‘‘written once.’’

For example, in Isaiah 5:8 MT has בֵּית בְּבֵית (lit. ‘‘house against house’’ or ‘‘house to house’’), but 1QIsa^a has omitted one of the two ב and reads בֵּית בֵּית (‘‘house of house’’).

2 Sam 22:15 MT, supported by other versions like Septuagint, Targum, Syriac, and Vulgate reads וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצִים וַיִּפִּצֵם בָּרֶק וַיַּהֲמֵם (‘‘He let loose arrows, and scattered them, lightning **and put them to rout**’’). The Qere reading in the Masoretic Text has וַיִּשְׁלַח חֲצִים וַיִּפִּצֵם בָּרֶק וַיַּהֲמֵם (‘‘He let loose arrows, and scattered them, lightning **and He roared**’’). The letter מ in the final word וַיַּהֲמֵם is written only once in the marginal note resulting in a different meaning.

In 1Thessalonians 2:7 “we became infants among you” from ἐγενήθημεν νήπιοι (ΕΓΕΝΗΘΗΜΕΝΝΗΠΙΟΙ) is rendered in some manuscripts as “we became gentle among you” from ἐγενήθημεν ἡπίοι (ΕΓΕΝΗΘΗΜΕΝΗΠΙΟΙ). In this case the letter ‘N’ which occurs twice in the original reading is copied only once in the variant reading, resulting in a change of meaning from “infant” to “gentle.”

g) Dittography (Double writing).

By accident, sometimes words or letters are written twice when they should have been written only once. This type of error is known as *dittography* from the Greek which means “written twice.” This happens in Isaiah 30:30. MT has וְהַשְׁמִיעַ (and he will cause to hear), whereas 1QIsa^a has הַשְׁמִיעַ הַשְׁמִיעַ (shall cause to hear shall cause to hear). Again, Isaiah 31:6 MT has שׁוּבוּ לְאִשֶּׁר הָעֲמִיקוּ קִרְיָהּ (come back to him whom they deeply offended), whereas 1QIsa^a has שׁוּבוּ לְאִשֶּׁר לְאִשֶּׁר הָעֲמִיקוּ קִרְיָהּ (come back to him to whom to whom they deeply offended). In 1QIsa^a here the word “to whom” (לְאִשֶּׁר) is written twice.

Another example is found in Jeremiah 51:3, MT has אַל יִדְרֹךְ הַדְּרֹךְ (“Let not the archer draw draw”), but the marginal note has אַל יִדְרֹךְ הַדְּרֹךְ (“Let not the archer draw”). In this case it is the MT that repeats the word יִדְרֹךְ twice.

In 1 Thess 2:7 (mentioned in 2.1.1.6 above) it is possible that Paul actually wrote ἡπίοι. In that case the letter ν in νήπιοι would be a repetition of the final ν in the preceding word ἐγενήθημεν, and in that case it is a result of dittography.

8.2.2 Mishearing of the Text being Read.

Copying of biblical text was often done by dictation. Many words sound alike. This can create problems for scribes when copying is done using this method. For example, in 1 Sam 17:7 MT has וַחֲזֵץ הַנִּיטוֹ (“and the arrow of his spear”), while the marginal note suggests וַעֲץ הַנִּיטוֹ (and the shaft of his spear). The confusion is caused by the fact that the letters ח and ע in the words וַחֲזֵץ and וַעֲץ sound alike.

There are vowels and diphthongs in Greek that some speakers could not distinguish. This may cause copyists to mishear and to misspell words. This is probably the explanation for variants in 1 John 1:4. Was John’s intention that “our (ἡμεῖς) joy may be complete” or “your (ὁμεῖς) joy may be complete”? Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55, “death is swallowed by ‘victory’ (νίκος)”, one variant reading has “death is swallowed by ‘controversy’ (νεῖκος)”, because νῖκος sounds almost the same as νεῖκος. Another example is found in Revelation 1:5 where one of the oldest manuscripts has λούσαντι (“washed” us from our sins, KJV), instead of λύσαντι (“freed” from our sins, RSV, NSRV, TEV).

8.2.3 Misjudgment.

In their attempt to preserve the original text, sometimes scribes made mistakes and introduced variants instead. For example scribes sometimes added notes about the text in the margin. A later scribe might think that this was meant to be part of the original text and add it to the text itself. John 5:3b-4 reads, “They were waiting for the water to move. The first sick person to go into the pool after the water was stirred up was healed from whatever disease he had, because every now and then an angel of the Lord went down into the pool and stirred up the water.” This is widely regarded as an addition to the text, and English versions like RSV, NRSV, NIV, TEV have left this portion out. It seems likely that this additional material was originally intended as an explanatory note.

8.3 Intentional Changes.

It is a well-known assumption that out of their respect for the text, scribes were very careful to preserve it in exactly the same form in which they received it, and so wrote their comments or corrections in the margin. In most cases this assumption is true, but there were exceptions. Some of the scribes did, in fact, intentionally introduce changes into the text itself. Below are two such examples.

8.3.1 Grammatical and Stylistic Changes.

In some instances grammatical and stylistic corrections were introduced into the text.

Revelation 1:4 – *Grammatical Change*. The phrase ἀπὸ ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος (“from him who is and who was and who is to come”), the preposition ἀπὸ is followed by the nominative rather than the usual genitive case. Thus a number of variants seek to correct this by inserting the genitive θεοῦ after ἀπὸ.

Mark 1:37 - *Stylistic Change*. The phrase καὶ εὗρον αὐτὸν καὶ λέγουσιν (“and they found him and said”), is changed in many variants to εὐρόντες αὐτὸν λέγουσιν. While the two mean basically the same, the latter is a more sophisticated participial construction.

8.3.2 Correction of what appear to be discrepancies.

In some instances scribes decided to smooth over what appeared to them to be discrepancies.

Mark 1:2-3, ‘As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”’ (Isaiah 40:3, NRSV). The phrase “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way” does not come from Isaiah, but is taken from Malachi 3:1. A scribe who was aware of this corrected the text by writing, “As it is written in the prophets,” thus producing a variant readings for verse 2.

Similarly Matthew 27:9, ascribed to the prophet Jeremiah, is actually taken from Zechariah 11:12-13 and Jeremiah 32:6-9. As a result some variant readings attribute the text to Zechariah rather than to Jeremiah.

8.3.3 Harmonization with Parallel Passages.

Sometimes scribes either expanded or corrected a text in the light of other biblical texts. Below are two examples.

NT harmonized with OT passages. The majority of the New Testament quotations from the Old Testament are from the Greek Bible or Septuagint (LXX). In John 2:17 “Zeal for your house will consume me,” a quotation from Psalm 69:9, the Greek word for “will consume” is καταφάγεται. A variant suggests κατέφαγέν (“has consumed”) to agree with the LXX.

NT harmonized with other NT Passages. In a variant, Luke’s version of the Lord’s prayer (11:2-4) is expanded with materials from Matthew’s version. In Acts 9:5, Jesus’ words to Paul, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” are expanded in one variant by adding, “it hurts you to kick against the goads” to match what is found in Acts 26:14. In John 19:14, Pilate handed Jesus over to the crowd at the “sixth hour,” but in Mark 15:25 Jesus was crucified at the “third hour.” In order to resolve this problem, one variant changes John to read “third hour.”

8.3.4 Conflation.

Sometimes scribes were faced with two or more variants. Finding difficulty in choosing between them, they joined them together. For example, in Luke 24:53, some texts read believers “were continually in the temple blessing (εὐλογοῦντες) God”. Other texts read “were continually in the temple praising (αἰνοῦντες) God.” Left with a difficult choice, one scribe suggested a conflated reading, “were continually in the temple blessing and praising God.”

8.3.5 Doctrinal concerns led scribes to change texts.

In some cases scribes introduced changes into the text for theological or doctrinal reasons. For example, in Matthew 24:36, speaking about the day of his coming, Jesus affirms, “about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Probably embarrassed by the suggestion that Jesus’ knowledge was limited, one variant reading omits the phrase “nor the Son.” In Luke 2:38-48, out of concern for the doctrine of the virgin birth, several variants have introduced different emendations to the text. In verse 33 one variant substituted “Joseph” instead of “his father”. Another variant left verse 48 out of the text. In verses 41 & 43 another variant reads “Joseph and Mary” instead of “his parents.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT NINE

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Bridging The Gaps

9.1 Introduction

Translation is communication, and if communication is to be effective it has to convey the sender's message faithfully and successfully. Bible translation has been an integral part of the mission of the Church since its very inception. Translating the Bible into different modern languages of the world is a challenge to translators and translation teams. The Bible is a product of particular cultures, of a particular geographical area, of a particular period of time. It is written in ancient languages, and each book has its own specific goals or purposes. Like other kinds of translation, Bible translation involves rendering the message from one cultural context to another. The Bible, of course, is not only a product of two different cultures but of two different ancient cultures, namely, ancient Hebrew and Greek. Therefore, translators have to work with one eye on the ancient Hebrew and Greek contexts and the other eye on their own context. As they do this, they will find many gaps between the world of the biblical writers and the world of modern translators and their target audiences. Let's now look at some of these gaps.

9.2 Language

Translators can be frustrated when they discovered that the source language does not always supply all the information they need to adequately determine meaning. Often, as is normal in all human communication, some information has been left implicit in the source text, and the original audience was expected to recover this information from the common context they shared with the author. The first problem for the modern translator is how to correctly identify this implicit information, or as much of it as is necessary to make good sense of the text. But even when this is done translators are faced with another difficult issue, namely, how to handle such information. Should they make it explicit in the translated text? Or should they rely on other means (such as footnotes, commentaries or the teaching of the church) to convey this important information to the audience? If they do choose to make it explicit, how should this be done, and how far should they go? These challenges arise because no two languages are the same. Languages differ both in terms of form and in terms of function. In other words, there are gaps between one language and another. Below are a few examples.

9.2.1 Lack of equivalent words or concepts.

Some receptor languages do not have the exact equivalents for words and concepts found in the source language, be it Hebrew or Greek or English. To cite a few examples from Northeast Indian languages: Ao Naga does not have a word for "sin"; Angami Naga is said to be lacking an equivalent for the generic term "god"; Sumi Naga does not have a word for "camel"; and many languages in Northeast India do not have a word for "cross". These are just a few examples, and there are many more, especially words related to flora and fauna. (Refer to the section "Where do we find words we do not have?")

9.2.2 Grammar and Syntax.

Some languages have no passive voice, which means that translators have to find ways to handle passive expressions which they find in Hebrew and Greek, and also in English. In most instances translators may be able to resolve this problem by changing the passive voice into the active voice, but this usually requires identifying the actor, information which may be only implicit in the source text. In Matthew 7.1, the text reads, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (RSV). "That you be not judged" is a passive expression, with the actor left implicit. Some languages will require translators to make explicit that God is the actor and to say "so that God will not judge you."

Another example is Mark 2:1, “When he returned to Capernaum after some days, *it was reported that he was at home*”. In many languages it will be necessary to say who reported this information.

In the Thai language the passive form tends only to be used in reference to unpleasant experiences. For example, it is appropriate to say “he was knocked down by a car,” but quite inappropriate to say “he was honored by the King.” Thus, a literal rendering of Mark 1.9, “Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan,” would imply in Thai that something unpleasant had happened to Jesus.

In other languages it may simply be that the passive voice is not commonly used. Chinese, for example, does have passive forms, but overuse of the passive is unnatural. **(Reference to any other unit that discusses this)**

9.2.3 Pronominal reference

Pronoun systems and the way they identify their referents vary considerably from one language to another. For this reason, translation of pronouns presents a considerable challenge.

One important example is the fact that in modern English the same word, “you”, expresses the second person pronoun in both singular and plural forms. This was not the case in early 17th century English, so the King James Version rightly differentiates between singular (thou, thee, thine) and plural (you, ye, your) forms. And the source text languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek all make this distinction explicit, as do many modern languages. Translators working from a modern English text will need to identify in each case whether “you” refers to one or more than one person. In addition some languages (many Polynesian languages for example) also have a different form for the dual, meaning “you two” and translators will have to carefully judge when it is appropriate to use this form as this information is not explicit in the source texts.

Another example of problems caused by pronominal reference is the fact that for the first person plural (“we”) some languages use different forms depending on whether the addressees (or recipients) are included in the group referred to (in which case an inclusive pronoun is used) or not (in which an exclusive pronoun is used). Once again, this is information which is not present in the source texts and will have to be deduced from the context.

9.2.4 Relationship terms

In some languages (like Khasi), the words “brother” and “sister” cannot stand alone without the qualifying adjectives “elder” and “younger.” It becomes a problem when even the context does not reveal whether the reference is to an elder or a younger brother or sister. Below are few examples-

If one is to translate Gen 14.12, “they also took Lot, the son of Abraham’s brother,” into Khasi, one must know whether Lot’s father is Abraham’s elder or younger brother. Another example is Mark 13.12, “And brother will deliver up brother to death,” and such examples are found throughout the Bible (e.g. Gen 20.5; 24.29; Ex 4.14; 32.27; Num 6.7; 18.6; Judg 9.5; Mat 4.18, 21; 5.22, 24).

Some languages have extremely complex sets of terms for relations like grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins, depending on which side of the family they come from, their relative age, their gender and so on. Usually this information is not present in the source texts and has to be the subject of an informed guess.

9.2.5 Honorifics.

Many languages in the world use honorifics. There are different forms of address that distinguish between polite and impolite, and between familiar and unfamiliar speech. In cultures where position and status are strictly observed, honorifics become a very sensitive issue. In many

cultures children are expected to follow certain norms when they speak to their parents, and similarly when students speak to their teachers, and when employees speak to their superiors, and so on and so forth. In the same way, when parents or teachers or superiors speak to their children or students or employees respectively, they use a form that would clearly indicate that they are in a higher position. People of equal status or close acquaintances always address one another in a rather casual way that they will not use when they speak to strangers or people they are not familiar with. There are certain forms people use only when they are angry. There are also words/expressions used only when people address God.

Certain words or phrases, and in most cases pronouns, serve as indicators in such speech situations. Unlike English (which has only one set of personal pronouns), languages that use honorific systems often have different sets of personal pronouns that are used to signal for different social relationships between speakers. Certain languages use verbs, verbal endings, and other markers to indicate these relationships.

Sometimes the information necessary to decide which form to use is available in the wider context of the source text (such as when a king speaks to his courtiers, or a son to his father), but at other times the translator must make the best assessment possible of the social situation and choose appropriate levels of honorific usage.

In languages which have a unique way of talking about or talking to divine beings the Gospels may present some difficult theological issues for translators. How should the narrator talk about Jesus – as a god or as a man? And how should he be addressed by his disciples, by his parents, by unbelieving Jews, by the common people, by Pontius Pilate? The nearest the Greek comes is in the use of titles of respect (like “teacher”, “master”, “sir”, or “Lord”) but this leaves much work for the translator to do.

9.2.6 Figures of Speech.

Figures of speech exist in all languages but differ according to the local culture. This is one area that challenges translators. In the study of classical and English literature many different types of figures of speech are recognized, such as, metaphors, euphemism, hyperbole, paradox, metonymy, synecdoche, etc. Not all languages will use or recognize all of these, but it is important to understand how they work in our source texts in order to decide how they will be represented in translation.

Metaphors. Metaphor is the use of language about something of which it is not normally used in a literal sense. Some metaphors are universal or near universal in nature, but some are culture-specific and thus very difficult for someone from another culture to understand. In most cases metaphors that are universal or near universal can be retained in translations, perhaps with some modification. For metaphors that are culture-specific, however, translators have to find ways to handle them. Retaining those metaphors may not convey any meaning or may give a different meaning altogether. Take as an example Matthew 16.17, “Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah! *For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you*, but my father in heaven.” Here “flesh and blood” represents “a human being” and this metaphor may be widely understood in many cultures. On the other hand it may sound quite unnatural and some languages may use a different combination of elements as a metaphorical way of referring to human beings. (See also Acts 2.17).

Similarly, we may assume that the figurative meaning of the phrase “walk in the light” in 1 John 1.7 can be understood, and so can be retained in receptor languages. It is true that the impact of such metaphors may not be the same in all languages, and even when the metaphor works in the target language, the meaning derived from it may be very different from that in the source text. For metaphors that are culture-specific it is always advisable that translators change them into similes. For example, in Hebrews 12.29, “for our God is a consuming fire,” there is every chance of the metaphor being misunderstood (i.e. that fire is God). In this case it is more helpful if the metaphor is changed into a simile “for our God is like a consuming fire.” This can also apply to

other passages such as Matthew 5.13, 14; 7.3. In some unavoidable instances it may be necessary to drop the metaphor altogether and express the meaning in plain language.

Euphemisms. Euphemism is a device designed to convey certain things that are not normally allowed to be directly mentioned, according to the politeness rules of a given culture. The typical subjects of euphemisms are sex, bodily functions, death, and the sacred. All these are found in the Bible. In both Hebrew and Greek the verb “to know” is used as a euphemism for sexual relations (Gen 4.1, 17, 25; Judg 19.25; 1Sa 1.19; Mat 1.25). In Judges 3.24 and 1 Sam 24.4 (English 24.3) Hebrew uses the phrase “cover one’s feet” as a euphemism for a bowel movement. The Hebrew euphemism for death is “to sleep with one’s fathers/ancestors” (1Ki 2:10; 11:21; 2Ki 8:24; 10:35; 2Ch 9:31; 12:16). In order to avoid uttering the sacred name of God, *YHWH*, Jews read *Adonai* every time it occurs.

Translating euphemisms literally from a source language may not only prevent readers from understanding the intended meaning of the euphemism in question, but could even convey a completely different meaning. In cultures where euphemisms are normally used for each of the subjects above it is expected that translators will make use of the culturally acceptable euphemisms. In some cultures, it is acceptable to refer directly to some of these topics without the use of euphemism.

Hyperbole. Hyperbole, that is the use of exaggeration, is a universal phenomenon, but at the same time it is language-specific. Rarely do we find examples of hyperbole that are common to two or more languages. This makes the translation task difficult. Hyperbole is common in the Bible. To mention just a few examples,

Deut 9.1 “Hear, O Israel; you are to pass over the Jordan this day, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and *fortified up to heaven*.”

John 21.25 But there are also many other things which Jesus did; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that *the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*.

Hyperboles are common especially in poetry. In cases where corresponding or similar sayings are not available in a given receptor language, translators may have to render what it means in plain language.

Paradox. Paradox, or statements that appear to be self-contradictory, are occasionally used in the Bible. Examples,

Micah 6.14-15 “You shall eat, but not be satisfied, and there shall be hunger in your inward parts; you shall put away, but not save, and what you save I will give to the sword. You shall sow, but not reap; you shall tread olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; you shall tread grapes, but not drink wine.”

Matthew 25.29 “For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.” [You can’t take away from a person who does not have anything]

John 1.11-12 “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.”

Paradoxical statements may or may not be common in the receptor language, but since the purpose of a paradox is to cause readers to think about what is said, the paradox should normally be retained in translation.

Synecdoche. This is another type of figure of speech in which a part of something is used for the whole thing. Examples,

Psa 35.28 “Then my tongue shall tell of your righteousness and of your praise all day long.” (“Tongue” here represents the whole person).

Isa 52.7 “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace...” (Here too “feet” stand for the whole person).

Rom 5.4-5 “Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I but also all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks.” (“Necks” in this context refers to people’s life).

This figure of speech, like any other figure of speech, has its beauty. However, in languages where this kind of figure of speech is not used or understood, it is best to put the meaning in plain language.

To sum up, there are at least three ways of handling figures of speech found in the source text.

- 1) Keep them if they are meaningful in the receptor language.
- 2) Use a figure available in the receptor language provided it carries the same meaning.
- 3) Express the meaning in plain language.

Translators are also encouraged to consider using figures of speech which naturally suggest themselves in the receptor language even in cases where they are not present in the source text, provided that they give the right meaning.

9.3 Culture.

The Bible is a product of ancient Hebrew and Greek cultures. There are certain elements that are unique to these cultures and other elements that are shared with the surrounding cultures. Culture includes among other things, customs (dress, food, how people relate to one another), beliefs and values, and lifestyle. Shaped by diverse environments, cultures are bound to be different. While neighboring cultures may demonstrate a certain degree of similarity, no two cultures are exactly the same. Cultural practices are handed down from one generation to the next in the form of traditions. However, cultures are dynamic and such practices or traditions do not always remain the same: they are modified by each succeeding generation. Furthermore, cultures interact with one another and in the process they influence each other, resulting in culture change. We see this clearly in the case of the biblical cultures, which demonstrate various changes and developments through a long period of history.

Through Bible Translation, receptor cultures are confronted by the various cultures found in the Bible. This is a challenge to every translator and translation team. At times the receptor cultures may have much in common with the biblical cultures, but at other times they may differ considerably. There are many aspects of culture that are universal in nature, but they are expressed in ways unique to each particular culture. Examples of such aspects of culture are marriage, kinship, systems of government, social status, wars and weapons, worship and ritual, food, dress, roles of men and women, recognized stages of life, to name a few.

Thus in translating from one language or culture to another, translators also serve as cultural mediators. In translating culturally specific sayings, such as proverbs, and producing a meaningful saying in the target language, translators are faced with the difficult choice of either translating

the saying from the source language fairly literally (and risking an unnatural or unusual result) or replacing it with an indigenous saying from the receptor language that conveys the same meaning (and risking some shift in meaning). The first option will make the translation sound somewhat foreign (“foreignizing”), while the latter option may make the source culture sound as if it is just like the target culture (“domesticating”).

Translating Song of Songs has a unique problem of its own. Love songs exist in many cultures, and they often employ figures of speech that may or may not be familiar, or may or may not be acceptable in the receptor languages. In Song of Songs there are concepts and expressions, particularly to do with relationships between men and women, which are either foreign or contradictory to modern cultures. (For a detailed discussion on this particular subject refer to a UBS Monograph, “The Cultural Factor in Bible Translation” by Ernst R. Wendland).

9.4 History.

Closely related to a culture is its history. Every ethnic group has its own history, and every society is shaped by the events that happened in the course of its history.

We must also keep in mind that historical events and other types of materials that are now in the Bible are written from a particular point of view. Modern readers or hearers do not share with the author the same background knowledge as do the original readers of the same biblical passage. This makes translation a difficult task. When we speak of the “original context,” we must, of course, remember that we no longer have access to the original settings of many of the passages in the Bible.

Translation alone cannot bridge this gap that separates modern readers from the historical context of a given text. Sometimes, in order to make the message clear, it is necessary to add information that is not in the text. It may not be possible to introduce such information into the text itself, in which case other devices such as footnotes, illustrations, introductions to books, and a glossary may be used.

9.5 Geography.

Before the Bible books were written, most of the stories and messages existed in an oral form. Both the oral traditions and the books themselves were produced in a particular geographical environment. However, unlike the people of the Holy Land, readers in the receptor languages are often unaware of the topographical shape or makeup of the Bible land. There are certain things connected with geography that are not familiar to modern readers, such as names of places, direction, distance, climate, vegetation, seasons, etc.

Take the word “wilderness” for instance; most of the translators I have worked with in Northeast India have a concept of “wilderness” (perhaps shared with many people in the region) which is different from that of Bible. The concept they have is of an area covered with thick forest, perhaps with lots of wild animals. Frankly, that was the concept I had too when I was growing up in Sunday School. For me, of course, that idea came from my own Khasi Bible in which wilderness is rendered as a “forest land,” and it is the same in many translations in Northeast India. Another option translators have is to translate the same word as “desert,” but even that does not help much as people in Northeast India have not seen a real desert. If this is to be rendered in Khasi (using my own language again), it will simply be a sandy riverside. On the other extreme, people living in truly desert areas such as the Thar desert in India or the Sahara desert in Africa, may also have a wrong concept of a “wilderness”, thinking perhaps of a large stretch of sand with no vegetation at all, instead of the rocky, remote, sparsely vegetated region referred to in the Bible. Dr. David Clark notes that among the Berber peoples of the Sahara, there are too many words for desert, and every time the word occurs in the Bible they want to know exactly what kind of desert it is, with sand, or shrub, flat or hilly, and so on, so that they can pick the right term from their extensive vocabulary.

There are, of course, limits in handling geographical issues in translation itself. Other devices such as pictures, maps, charts, etc. are helpful and translators should seek to use these aids as much as possible.

9.6 Time.

The Bible is one of the oldest books ever published. Of course, the stories and events recounted in its pages are much older than the printed book itself. Related to time are the cultures and the (historical) settings in which the biblical stories took shape. Produced in different cultures, in different settings, and at different times, many features of these stories and events are foreign to modern readers. Translators are entrusted with the difficult task of preserving the originality and integrity of those stories and events, and at the same time making them appealing and relevant to modern readers. Translators who are alert to these hurdles will no doubt have a rough ride along the way, but will in the end produce better results.

9.7 Ecological Environment.

Some types of trees and animals are commonly found everywhere, but there are also local species found only in certain parts of the world. This causes problem in translation, as some of the names of trees or herbs and animals are not only new to translators, but the identity of those trees and animals cannot be determined with any certainty. Even with those that are common, people's attitude to certain animals or trees will differ, and are sometimes even contradictory. For example, in the Bible the pig is among the unclean animals and thus forbidden for the Jews to eat. But in many other cultures the pig is not only the most common domesticated animal but may be considered among the delicacies. At times, specific names are used as generic names referring to a specific class. For example, in most of the languages in Northeast India "eating rice" is equivalent to having lunch or dinner, just as potato or yam or banana is used in the same way in other parts of the world. Similarly, cow or pig may be used as a generic term referring to domesticated animals. Also, even today many people in Northeast India do not have any idea what a vine looks like. The common concept is that of a big tree with lots of branches. These are only a few examples, and while the UBS book on "Flora and Fauna" has been a great help to translators, a lot more work needs to be done in this area.

In dealing with unfamiliar plants and animals we are again faced with three options, namely, (1) retain the names as mentioned in the Bible (even though readers would have little or no idea what they are or what they look like), (2) use names of other trees or herbs or animals, known to the target culture, that resemble in some way those mentioned in the Bible. (Some will object to this option as it amounts to adding something which is not in the text), and (3) use the names mentioned in the Bible but also identify the family they belong to (such as, a tree called ..., or an animal called ..., etc.). There are many examples of words we have to treat in these ways, but here are two of them: "dill and cumin" (Isa 28:25, 27); "ostriches" (Job 30:29; Isa 13:21; 34:13; 43:20; Jer 50:39; Lam 4:3; Mic 1:8). In each case the word could be directly transliterated into the target language's sound system, or the name of a similar plant or bird could be used (such as "cassowary" for "ostrich"), or a general description could be combined with the name ("a food plant called dill", "a big bird called an ostrich", "something like a cassowary, called ostrich"). If there is a particular characteristic of the plant or animal, as it is understood in the source culture, which is important to its use in that particular passage, then it may be necessary to provide this information in a footnote, or by a picture.

9.8 Worldview.

There are other areas we have not covered that may cause as much problem in translation. Every ethnic group has its own view or concept about creation or the beginning of things, about God and the spirit world, about worship and sacrifices, about marriage, about sickness and death, and these are just a few components of the worldview of a particular society. Furthermore, every society has its own value systems, and ethical and moral norms and practices. The Bible reflects concepts

and moral values drawn from basically two different systems, Hebrew and Greek. To convey such things to their own respective readers translators are often stretched to the limit, and left with no option but to interpret the text. The danger is that they may end up with a wrong interpretation, as they often have to rely on the presupposition or information they have available to them. UBS aids for translators, such as the Handbooks, monographs and other specialist books, together with input from Translation Consultants, provide some safeguard for the translators in these situations.

9.9 Conclusion.

All human communication takes place in a particular context or environment and the Scriptures are no different. They have their own location in time and space, and are shaped by the language, the thought forms, the culture, the history and geography of that location. Thus the original context influences the form of the message which the authors of Scripture sought to convey, both in terms of what is said (by referring to particular places or events or customs, or using particular forms of language) and in terms of what is left unsaid (the assumptions which the author does not have to fill in for his audience – see the unit on “[Implicit and Explicit Information](#)”, p. 69). All of our modern audiences are at a disadvantage because their own location in space and time, in language and geography, is very different. There are huge gaps of understanding to be overcome. If translators are to convey the same message to these new audiences in new languages, then they must be bridge builders. Like the engineers who build road and rail bridges, they must study the terrain carefully, learn all they can about both sides of the gap (the world of the ancient text and the world of the modern community) and design a bridge which is both effective and efficient to carry the meaning across.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT TEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

Checklist Of Some Important Biblical Terms

The following lists are not necessarily exhaustive but they do contain most of the frequently occurring terms in OT and NT. Translators should determine the way in which these should be rendered, with attention to the components of each term. The following classifications are for convenience only. It may be helpful to determine how to render these terms at an early stage of the translation. Referring back to the list will help ensure consistency of terminology and translation.

1. God/gods

Advocate
Anointed One
Christ
Comforter
Counsellor
God
God Almighty
God Most High
gods
Holy One of Israel
Holy Spirit
LORD
Lord
LORD God
Lord Jesus
Lord of hosts
mediator
Messiah
Savior
Son of God
Son of Man
sons of God
spirit
Spirit of God

2. Priest

Chief Priest
High Priest
levite
priest
Rabbi
scribe

3. Prophet

astrologer
divination
diviner
dream
magician
man of God

medium
prophecies
prophecy
prophet
prophetess
seer
soothsayer
sorcerer
vision
wizard

4. Apostle

apostle
disciple
brethren
deacon
bishop
elder

5. Rulers

anoint
authorities
council
counsellor
emperor/Caesar
eunuch
governor
judge
king
magistrate
official
pharaoh
queen
ruler
tetrarch
throne

6. Male/Female

betroted
daughter-in-law
handmaid

harlot
maidservant
mother-in-law
older sister
prostitute
servant [female]
slave [female]
virgin
younger sister
bridegroom
father-in-law
master
nearest kin
older brother
prostitute [male]
servant [male]
slave [male]
son
son-in-law
younger brother

7. Spirit Beings

angel
archangel
cherub[im]
devil
evil one
evil spirits
messenger
powers
Satan
seraph[im]
Belial; Beelzebul

8. Country/Location

country = countryside
country = territory
hill country
kingdom
nation
province

city
daughter of Zion
desert
field
land of milk and honey
town
village
wilderness
abyss
east
ends of the earth
firmament
Hades
Heaven
heavens
Hell
Judea
lake
north
sea
Sheol
south
summer
the deep
west
winter
world
world of the dead

9. People

ancestors
Antichrist
assembly
children of Israel
church
clan
congregation
false Christ
family
father's house
flesh (people)
generation
gentile
house of Israel
Israel (individual)
Israel (northern kingdom)
Jew(s)
Jewish authorities
Judah (individual)
Judah (southern kingdom)
people
Pharisee
remnant
Sadducee
tribe

10. Temple

ark of the covt.
courtyard
mercy seat
sanctuary
synagogue
tabernacle
temple
tent of meeting
altar
cornerstone
curtain
ephod
high places
holy place
horns of the altar
lampstand
most holy place
pillar
sacred trees
tables of stone
testimony
utensils
veil
vessels

11. Sacrifice

bread of the Presence
burnt offering
cereal offering
drink offering
first fruits
first-born
freewill offering
guilt offering
incense offering
manna
offering
peace offering
sacrifice
sin offering
thankoffering
tithes
votive offering
wave offering
crucify
cross

12. Worship

baptism
baptize
believe
bless God
blessing
bow down

captivity
circumcision
covenant
exile
exult
fear
glorify
Good News
Gospel
honor
inherit
oath
praise
pray
promise
Scripture
swear
thanksgiving
vow
worship
phylactery
tongues

13. Curse

"Woe to
blaspheme
curse
dishonor

14. Holiness

atonement
clean
faith
faithful
fasting
holy (set apart for God)
impure
in dust and ashes
justification
make obeisance
pure
sanctify
unclean
leprosy/skin disease

15. Sin

sin
crime
error
trespass
guilt
injustice
unfaithful
immoral
greedy

hypocrite
adultery
fornication
envy
hatred
jealousy

16. Law
commandment
instruction
law
precept
teaching

17. Literature
allegory
parable
poem
prophecy
proverb
psalm
psalmist
revelation
saying
song
wisdom
gospel
epistle

18. Animals
animal
ass/donkey
bull
calf
camel
cow
dove
eagle
flock
fox
goat
herd
kid
Leviathan
mule
ox
pigeon
Rahab
ram
sea monster
sheep
vulture
wild animal

19. Plants
barley
cedar
fig
grapes
oak
olive
palm tree
pomegranates
strong drink
terebinth
vineyard
wheat
wine

wine press
wine skin
glean
harvest
former rain
latter rain

20. Clothes
breastpiece
cloak
coat
flax
girdle
linen
sackcloth
turban/helmet
wool
sandals

21. War
armour
armour bearer
arrow
axe
besiege/ lay siege
booty
bow
captive
commander
fortified city
gate
javelin
officer
shield
spear
stronghold
sword
tower
two-edged sword
utterly destroy
wall

soldier
warrior

22. Music
flute
harp
horn
lyre
pipe
tambourine
trumpet
cymbal
drum

23. Minerals
brass
bronze
clay
copper
gold
iron
lead
precious stone
silver

24. Professions
baker
butler
goldsmith
perfumer
scribe
shepherd
centurion

25. Feasts
feast of booths
feast of new moon
feast of weeks
harvest festival
Passover
Pentecost
Tabernacles
Day of Atonement
Feast of Unleavened Bread
sabbath

26. Other
age
Amen
blood
body
eternity
fellowship
for ever
glory
Hallelujah
mercy
miracle/sign
redemption
salvation
steadfast love
elect(ion)
Immanuel
Zealot
Herodian
Hosanna

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT ELEVEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Divine Names (as translated in the NRSV)

Adon(ai)

Literally (my) lord or master. This is actually a title rather than a name but it was the word the Israelites read when they saw the divine name in the written text of the OT. The vowels of this word are what are found with the tetragrammaton YHWH.

Almighty

This name is found some 40 times in the OT, 30 of them in the book of Job. It renders the Hebrew term *shaddai* and is used often in parallel with other divine names or titles. See also *El-shaddai*.

Alpha and Omega

This phrase is used 3 times in the book of Revelation. It is literally "the beginning and the end," *Alpha* being the first letter of the Greek alphabet and *Omega* the last. The sense of the phrase is that God encompasses everything.

Baal

In Biblical Hebrew the name *Baal* actually is the word for master or husband. In Canaanite literature it is the name of one of the gods associated with fertility who was worshipped by the Canaanites. Israel was forbidden to worship Baal, but there is evidence that many in Israel did follow this Canaanite practice and worship this god.

El

This is the most basic or generic Hebrew term for a divine being or god. It is always used in combination with other elements - see below.

Elohim

The more common Hebrew term for God. The noun is a plural form, and sometimes the context makes it clear that it refers to gods other than Israel's true God. However, for the most part the noun refers to the God of Israel. Frequently it is used in compound form with the divine name YHWH as "the Lord God."

El-berith

Literally, "the god of the covenant" (see Jdg 9.46).

El-elyon

Literally "god of the height" or "God most high" (Gen 14.19). The name is used mostly in the Psalms (7.17; 18.13; 78.35; 91.9 etc.)

El-olam

In Gen 21.33 this name appears and is rendered as "the everlasting God" in RSV and NRSV - see also Isa 40.28; Jer 10.10.

El-roi

Literally, "a god of seeing" this phrase is found in Gen 16.13.

El-shaddai

This is the more common phrase compounded with the generic term *El*. Traditionally the translation has been "God Almighty." (Gen 17.1; 28.3; 35.11; 43.14; 48.3). The book of Job uses this term 30 times without the *El* prefix.

Eloah

This is an expanded form of the basic noun *El*, perhaps the singular form of *Elohim*. - 2 Chr 32.15; Ps 114.7, but mostly in Job where it is used in parallel with *Shaddai* and *El*.

Father

This term is used over 250 times in the NT. It uses the metaphor of fatherhood to speak of the relationship between God, Jesus and his followers (Rom 1.7 etc.). This term is used occasionally in the OT.

Fear of Isaac

In Gen 31.42 this name is used in the context of affirming a covenant between Jacob and his father-in-law. It describes God's protection rather than being a specific name by which God is known.

God (NT: theos)

This also is a title rather than a name. It is the basic or generic way of referring to the divine being.

Holy One (of Israel)

Used some 41 times, most of the occurrences are in Isaiah. It is the prophet's favored term for God. It stresses God's holiness over against the sinfulness of the nation of Israel.

Lord (NT: kurios)

This is a title rather than a name. It is the way in which the NT renders quotations from the OT where the tetragrammaton, YHWH, appears. (See below) This follows the tradition of the Septuagint translators who translated YHWH as *Kurios*, based presumably on the fact that the Israelites read *Adonai*, "my lord/master," when they saw the tetragrammaton in the Hebrew text. When the title is applied to Jesus the meaning ranges from a polite and respectful "Sir", through to an attribution of deity, or close identification of Jesus with YHWH, depending on the context and who is using it.

LORD (OT: YHWH – see below)**LORD of Hosts**

This phrase occurs almost 250 times in the OT. It combines the title "Lord" (YHWH) with the genitive "of hosts," thought to be a reference of the hosts of Heaven. The "hosts" refers to (1) the stars and other heavenly bodies (Jdg 5.20), and (2) a heavenly army, possibly of angels (1 Kgs 22.19-23).

Mighty One of Jacob

In Gen 49.24-25 the phrase links with *El-shaddai*. The "mighty one" is Yahweh and the genitive form indicates that this mighty one is the one who cares for Jacob. It could also refer to the fact that this "mighty one" is the one Jacob worships.

YHWH (Yahweh)

In the OT the specific name by which God is known is the enigmatic tetragrammaton YHWH. In Ex 3.13-15 Moses is given the name that is usually translated as "I am who I am" (Heb. *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh*). In 6.2-3 the name is given as the third person singular of the verb *hwh*, "to be/live." It is thought that the pronunciation of the tetragrammaton would be "Yahweh," and this is the form used in NJB and all technical academic writing. Since the name was not pronounced when

Israelites read the Hebrew text, we cannot be absolutely certain that this was the actual pronunciation of the name. The Septuagint renders it as *Kurios* following the Qe're form *adonai*. Hence most English Bible translations continue to use the form LORD, a title, not a name.

The English word Jehovah is constructed from the consonants of Yahweh and the vowels of Adonai.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT TWELVE

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Biblical Studies and Bible Translation

(The following is a summary of Graham Ogden's article on this topic in *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference*, ed. Tim Wilt. It introduces the topic and provides a brief survey of the field. It is for background information and may not necessarily be part of any translation training curriculum. It may be helpful for the exegete in the group if he or she has not had this kind of exposure before.)

Since interpretation of any text must always precede its translation, it is important for translators to know something of the processes by which the meaning of a text can be determined. Key developments in the science of interpretation can be treated under the following headings:

12.1 Lexical and Grammatical studies

Knowledge of the biblical languages, Hebrew (and Aramaic) and Greek is essential. Acceptable and accurate translation of a biblical text depends on the translator's ability to work with these languages, if not directly, then indirectly through the use of the many aids now available.

Basic tools currently available permit the translator to do more efficient and extensive context-sensitive lexical and grammatical studies of these ancient texts.

Paratext (now in version 6.0) is our basic tool for accessing a variety of Bible versions together with electronic tools for searching the Hebrew and Greek texts. Other exegetical tools are available in the Translator's Handbooks and articles from the *Bible Translator*. Semantic domain dictionaries of the Greek and Hebrew (in preparation) texts allow the translator to search and uncover meanings of semantically related terms.

Other electronic tools such as the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* and the *Word Biblical Commentary* are also available.

Waltke and O'Connor's 1990 *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* is an important tool alongside Botterweck and Ringgren's *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (now to Vol.12), together with BDB (F.Brown, S.R.Driver, and C.A.Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*) and Köhler and Baumgartner's *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2000).

In NT studies, Blass and Debrunner's *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (1961) together with Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2000) are vital tools. Louw and Nida's semantic domains Greek-English lexicon on Paratext is also a required tool. Additionally, K. Aland's *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (1997) offers the Greek text of the Gospels in parallel form for comparison purposes.

Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* in 10 volumes is now dated but remains a source of much useful information. It has been replaced by Brown's *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (1986) and Balz's *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (1993).

It goes without saying that commentaries on individual biblical books are significant sources of information. However, there are various types of commentaries, some of which are not particularly helpful for translators. All commentaries should be used in conjunction with the

Translator's Handbooks where available. Very often translators will find that detailed information on specific points in the text, which may be important for its translation, are not handled by the commentaries.

12.2 Historical-critical studies

Understanding the historical circumstances within which a text developed and was transmitted can aid the translator to better render the text's meaning. However, this kind of historical study is often of limited value since there are notable problems of dating texts once we consider that many stories and traditions have a long and very complicated history. Nevertheless this kind of study can offer some general conclusions about the way texts have continued to be worked over as they move from oral to written forms and beyond. Many have not been written by those who traditionally have been understood to be the authors. Dating and setting are also very difficult to establish in the case of, for example, prophetic texts.

12.3 Textual Criticism

Knowing that we are attempting to translate from the most reliable and earliest texts available is an important aspect of Bible translation. We do not have the original manuscripts so textual scholars search for what they believe to be the text closest to the original, from among the many later manuscripts available. UBS's Scholarly Editions provide the most up-to-date texts available. For the New Testament, the standard edition is *The Greek New Testament*, 4th Revised Edition (GNT4). The text of this edition is the same as that of the *Nestlé-Aland 27th edition* (NA27), but its apparatus provides more information on fewer points of textual variation, concentrating on those that are significant for translation. For the Old Testament, the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) will soon be replaced by what is currently called *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* (BHQ). The Hebrew Old Testament Text Project (HOTTP) lists all the significant textual data for the OT, offering evaluation of readings and suggested translations.

Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) in 1947 there has been a great advance in OT textual studies, though perhaps complicating the earlier views of a single Masoretic Text (MT) source. This, together with Septuagint (LXX) studies, provides a fuller picture of Judaism at the close of the OT period and into the NT period.

Emmanuel Tov's *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* and Bruce Metzger's *A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT* are necessary handbooks for understanding textual issues in both testaments.

12.4 Archaeology

Archaeological discoveries have shed light on biblical religion and daily life in Bible times. These assist the translator to better understand the socio-economic, technical, trade and international settings within which biblical events took place. They are also important for cultural information that can give the translator a clearer picture of life at these times and of how different or similar they might be to the translator's world. Art objects, structures, and utensils all enlighten our understanding of people from the past.

Many archaeological finds have helped us understand the difference between official religion and popular religion since many religious artefacts found indicate that popular religion tended towards a more syncretistic practice than religious officials could tolerate. Amulets, religious tools and objects, local gods (*teraphim*) all suggest a broader range of religious views than might be gained from the official texts.

Literary finds from cultures surrounding Israel have shed important light on the shared culture of the region from Egypt through to Assyria and Babylon. Proverbs, Songs and the wisdom material generally reflect much shared understanding of human life throughout the region. Literary genres are common – from legal material to psalms and hymns. Their form and content are similar

indicating that Israel's entire culture holds much in common with that of surrounding nations. This is hardly surprising when one considers the origins of Israel going back to Abraham, who left what is now Iraq to make his way across the Fertile Crescent to Canaan. The traffic between these centers in trade and general communication indicates that Israel had more in common with its neighbours than was distinctive.

12.5 Source Criticism and Redaction Criticism – forming the final text

The Bible is a composite work formed over many generations. From the oral period through to the traditions being set in written form, there has been a long history. Material from various sources has been put together and reworked over the centuries. Scholars have in the past tried to identify some of these sources, with varied success and agreement. While this investigation, often known as *Source Criticism*, has some merit, the trend in the more recent past has been towards recognising the primary role of the “final form” of texts.

The long redactional or editorial processes that have given us the material in its present form has made clear that our present text is the result of an extremely complex development. It is no longer possible, however, to uncover the stages of development in detail with any degree of certainty and scholarly consensus. *Redaction Criticism* is interested in how the final editor (or *redactor*) has put his material together and has had the advantage of focusing away from the fragmentation of texts that came about as a result of a focus on sources. In the NT this approach has tended to concern itself more with the Gospels than the other literature. It has sought to identify some of the theological motivation behind the individual editors gathering, arranging, editing and modifying the material available to them. By studying the processes thought to be at work in the editing of the biblical material, readers today can have greater insight into the specific concerns of the authors and editors.

12.6 Canonical Criticism

James Sanders in 1972 published an account of what he called “canon criticism,” an attempt to examine the process by which texts became authoritative for the community, the process of canonisation. Throughout history faith communities have been shaped by these texts, and although each community may see different meaning or value in certain traditions, nevertheless each has seen the text as having authority over them. Brevard Childs also has approached the text from this perspective and noted how editors interpreted the traditions in ways that became for them as well as for later generations theologically valid and important. The proper context for treating individual parts of Scripture is the entire body of Scripture.

12.7 Intertestamental Studies

A new appreciation of the value of the intertestamental material has been significant for Bible Society translation personnel, not only for those who have to work alongside Orthodox colleagues but also for the insight it has given into the textual and religious situations during the close of the OT and beginning of the NT periods. Studies of the LXX and of the new materials provided by the DSS have been highly significant in refining our picture of the Judaism of the period.. It appears as much more diverse than might have been previously thought both in terms of its theological traditions as well as linguistically. As for the Hebrew text, it is clear that the situation was complex. While the MT was moving towards stabilization, the Qumran material indicates that there were various text-types in circulation, some very close to the LXX. Clearly the OT canon was not definitively fixed. The diversity of Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism was quite marked.

12.8 Intertextuality

Rhetorical Criticism, Semiotics and Structuralism all relate to this aspect of exegesis in one way or another. Basically, intertextuality recognises that authors and editors borrow from their traditions when composing or working over a literary piece. In this case, biblical and extra-biblical material may be referred to in direct or less direct ways in order to help readers relate to

the “message” they wish to share. In this way they can enhance the material they produce as older traditions are applied in new ways. Themes like creation, the exodus, sacrificial models and the like are all taken up and reworked in both OT and NT. Fishbane calls this “inner-biblical exegesis” as each new generation appropriates the traditions for themselves. Quotations, allusions, echoes of earlier texts find their way into later writings to enrich them and to reapply them. For example, the interweaving of the Creation and Exodus themes in Isaiah 40-55 is particularly noteworthy as well as the application of the Moses imagery to Cyrus in Isa 44.28-45.13.

12.9 Trends in Interpretation

Apart from the earlier exegetical methods such as Form Criticism and its development as Rhetorical Criticism, some of the main recent trends in interpretation are as follows:

12.9.1 Reader-Response Criticism

This approach focuses on the reader or hearer of the text, moving the primary focus away from an “objective” text towards the reader’s own personal and thus more “subjective” context. Of course, every reader/hearer of a text interprets in his or her own way depending on quite personal factors. It is never possible to treat a text in a totally objective manner. Reader-response criticism recognizes this fact but seeks to give it a greater role in the overall interpretive task. Many applications of this approach, however, would want to seek some measure of control over the interpretation, to be exercised by a wider community or group (sometime called an “interpretive community”) rather than place all the weight upon a purely personal or individual interpretation. A useful Introduction to this approach can be found in the series of articles in *Semeia* 48(1989), “Reader Perspectives on the NT.”

12.9.2 Feminist Approaches

Partly in tune with current social trends, but also in recognition of patriarchal domination within the biblical cultures and the male-dominated interpretation “industry,” women have raised the issue of gender bias and offered their own interpretive approaches. One of their aims is to have the women in the Bible more “visible” by focusing on the role of women in the text as well as by using gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language when translating (See NRSV and compare with RSV – Mt. 17.22, “men’s hands” rendered as “human hands”; Rom 7.4, RSV “brethren” becomes “friends” in NRSV). In these ways they seek to highlight some of the sub-text of Scripture. One contribution of this approach has been to sensitize the community to the social backgrounds and cultural values within the ancient texts as well as the background values present in their own interpretations.

12.9.3 Cross-cultural biblical interpretation: indigenous approaches

Seeking to at least supplement Western scholarship with other cultural perspectives on the biblical text, scholars from Asia, Latin America and Africa are contributing exegetical insights from their own cultural worldviews. Cultural resources and social experiences of those who have for long been under the domination of western cultural approaches to the text play a part in assisting new perspectives to be shared. There is a sense in which exegetes from non-western cultures are endeavouring to free themselves from approaches to the text that are alien to their own cultures, especially in cases where there has been colonial domination and its imposition of exegetical viewpoints.

In some cases this approach expresses itself in the search for values, traditions, teachings, customs and the like that are close to or give insight into the ancient biblical culture that may not be available to those from the west or from other neighboring cultures. It affirms the God-givenness of all cultures and of the validity of coming to the biblical text from within one’s own valued frame of reference.

12.9.4 Post-colonial studies

Closely connected to the previous approach, this approach is the special contribution of those who have been the marginalised, colonised and suppressed minority groups within major cultural associations. The attempt to assert the value of one’s own culture, language and traditions and

thus to affirm one's identity and selfhood lie behind this approach. It recognises that there is in the Scriptures material that is written from the perspective of the coloniser as well as the colonised.

Using this methodology of Bible reading, Post-colonial readers react against the "coloniser's" interpretations and aim to reclaim the value of their own traditions and perspectives. This may apply to those who are immigrants within a majority alien community as well as to those who have suffered the colonising impact of foreign invaders. These insights have important ramifications for "western" or "westernised" interpreters since they can supplement and correct limited, incomplete or incorrect assumptions from that source.

12.9.5 Region-centric studies

Social-justice concerns such as were highlighted by Liberation Theology in Latin America, and the reclaiming of national traditions and religious terminology in other regions to provide further insights into biblical texts, represent another important development. These studies give many important insights especially into wisdom literature as well as religious practices that can be a means of relating one's own history and culture more directly to the biblical text.

Translators who are familiar with their own traditions may well have a more broad range of vocabulary and concepts on which to draw in determining which terminology will most effectively communicate the biblical message. At the same time, the "otherness" of the biblical text needs to be preserved.

12.10 Ideology and exegesis

Each individual subscribes consciously or unconsciously to a certain "ideology," or set of ideas. This applies to the biblical writers and editors as well as to those interpreting and translating their texts. It is vitally important for exegetes to try to understand the ideology behind particular texts – for example, the Deuteronomist and Chronicler, the author of Job, or Matthew and John. Without some understanding of their ideologies and purpose (whether openly stated or not), exegetes and translators will be hampered in their task.

On the other hand, exegetes and translators need to be conscious of their own ideologies when approaching their task and seek to limit the impact it might have on their work. The translators' responsibility is to reflect the source text as accurately as possible, whether they agree with some of its sentiments or not. Imposing one's own ideology by the choice of certain terms, or skewing the translation to make it say what one would prefer it to say, is not acceptable practice. This may apply not just to individual ideologies but to corporate or denominational ideologies – for example, rendering the word "wine" as some kind of innocuous juice because of local or denominational opposition to drinking wine; imposing a theology of "representation" in the words "This is my body," etc. Each of us needs to be aware of our own motives, goals and ideologies and try to ensure that they do not invade the text and prevent it or hinder it saying what it seeks to say.

12.11 Sociological approaches

The Social Sciences can often assist in helping exegetes and translators bridge the gap between their own social setting and awareness and that of the biblical texts. This is often done by making comparisons between modern human communities and the ancient ones. Anthropology may perhaps offer the best insight into the various cultural institutions and values of ancient Israel or the early Christian groups. This has been applied to texts dealing with the settlement of the Israelites in Canaan with the suggestion by Mendenhall that the Conquest was really a spark for an internal revolt by Canaanite serfs. That is to say, it was a peasant revolt. Understanding the establishment of the monarchy as a reaction to changing social patterns or external pressure, or Jesus as a wandering charismatic leader gathering sympathisers in local communities etc. can all shed some further light on the situations within the biblical text. It provides a tool that can supplement some of the other more traditional exegetical methodologies.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

SECTION FOUR – TRANSLATION PRINCIPLES

UNIT THIRTEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Implicit and Explicit Information

13.1 Introduction

Suppose I were to write a report of a recent trip, to be read by people in Northeast India, I might say something like this:

Report #1

"In the morning we left Meghalaya for Tezpur. On the way we were surprised to see how low the Brahmaputra was. In Tezpur we met a delegation from Bhutan."

People from Northeast India will have no trouble understanding the various actions and places described in this paragraph. However, if I were writing the same report for a group in England, I might need to relate the information quite differently, perhaps like this:

Report #2

"In the morning we left the hill state of Meghalaya, heading for the city of Tezpur. When we crossed the mighty Brahmaputra River on the way, we were surprised to see how low the river was at that time. In Tezpur we met a delegation from the neighboring kingdom of Bhutan, located in the mountains to the north."

People in England will appreciate the extra information that has been added to Report #2, because it will help them to understand more clearly what is happening. Instead of being baffled and confused, they may even find the report interesting. But if I were to write those same words in a report intended for people in Northeast India, they might wonder what my motive was. Was this really a report for them, or was I planning to present it to a wider audience? If it was meant only for them, then was I trying to show off my skill at writing at the same time as presenting a report? They would be the ones who might be baffled and confused, whereas the simpler report presented first would be immediately clear to them.

What is the reason for the difference between the two reports and the different reactions between the two groups of readers? The reason is based on a basic principle of the way people use language:

A person speaks or writes to communicate information or ideas. Ordinarily we do not tell people something they already know. We tell them only as much as they need to know in order to understand what we want to say.

How does this help us to understand these two different reports? It tells us that Report #1 is short, leaving out a lot of information contained in Report #2, precisely because the people who will read Report #1 already know all of that information. They do not need to be told. Furthermore, they do not expect to be told, and they may wonder what the writer is trying to do if he tells them things that they already know perfectly well.

On the other hand, for people who know nothing of the geography of Northeast India, the simple statement of the facts given in Report #1 will be hard to follow. People will not know what the writer is referring to. Is Meghalaya a person? A city? Because it is called "the Brahmaputra" and it is "low", they might be able to guess that the Brahmaputra is a river. However, once the extra information is provided, as in Report #2, all of these places begin to come to life for them. Without the information, the report is too dense. With the extra information, people in England reading Report #2 begin to understand our travel somewhat in the same way that readers in Northeast India will understand, based on Report #1.

Notice one very important fact. The extra information provided in Report #2 does not give any information that would not already be known by a person from Northeast India. When the two reports are compared, Report #2 seems to include a lot of information that is missing from Report #1. However, communication through language takes place in a certain context, between a producer and a receiver. It is the total communication event that needs to be compared, not just the words used. If we take the whole situation into account, considering especially the intended readers of the two reports, we will discover that there is nothing extra added to Report #2 that would not be clearly understood by every reader of Report #1.

This shows us that in every communication event, there are some things that need to be clearly stated and there are some things that do not need to be stated, because they are already understood by the speaker and hearers. There are special terms for these two parts of meaning:

Things which are clearly stated in the words of a communication are *explicit*.

Things which are understood by the speaker and hearers (or writer and readers), and are part of the meaning of the text, but which are not actually stated in words in the communication are *implicit*.

The total communication is made up of a combination of explicit and implicit meaning.

It is important not to misunderstand the point here! We are not saying that we can add anything we like to a text and say that it is "implicit meaning". Look at this third version of the report about the trip:

Report #3

"It was still early on the rainy morning when our ancient jeep left the hill state of Meghalaya, heading for our planned five-day visit to the city of Tezpur. When we crossed the mighty Brahmaputra River on the way, we were surprised to see how low the river was at that time, with many boats moored in the mud on both sides of the river. In Tezpur the following afternoon we were honored to meet with a delegation impressively dressed in their traditional finery. They had come from the neighboring kingdom of Bhutan, located in the mountains to the north, and they had been waiting for us for several days."

There are many new bits of information added to this third version of the report, but none of this new information is in any way *implicit* in the first or second version of the report. Readers from Northeast India would need to be given this information just as much as readers from any other part of the world, because it is all information which they cannot know unless we tell them. Report #1 and report #2 are basically the same report. The difference is that certain information is left implicit in report #1 and it is made explicit in report #2. However, report #3 is a completely different report, adding a lot of new information which is completely missing from the first two reports.

13.2 Application to translation

All of the examples we looked at in the previous section are in English. The difference between them is caused by the difference in the knowledge that the intended readers share with the writer, because when knowledge is shared it can be left implicit. These examples show us that even when we are using the same language, the need to make information implicit or explicit will depend on the situation we are writing or speaking for.

However, once we begin to compare two different languages, we will discover that the use of implicit and explicit information becomes extremely important. There are many reasons for this, but some of them should be very clear. We have already seen that even people using the same language need different amounts of implicit and explicit information, depending on their background and situation. So we can expect this to be much more true when we are comparing people from two different cultures and geographical regions. Furthermore, as we will see, different languages allow different kinds of information to be left implicit and require different kinds of information to be made explicit. So when translating from one language to another, the way we handle implicit and explicit information will naturally be a major issue.

All of this becomes yet more true when we talk about Bible translation. This is because the cultures of the Bible are different from the cultures of today, not only because of the language and the geography and culture and world-view (all of these things are important when translating between two modern languages), but also because of the enormous difference in time between the period of the Bible and the period we live in today.

Before we begin to look at the many ways in which implicit and explicit information are important in translation, let us look one more time at the three different reports of the trip in Northeast India. Like the writer of our Report #1, most Bible writers were writing for people who already knew the geography of their area. They did not need to tell their readers about the places they were writing about, because when those readers saw a name, they already knew whether it referred to a town, a river, a mountain, a province or region, or a country. The meaning is already there, in the shared information between the Bible writer and the first Bible readers. Those first readers knew implicitly what each name referred to. There was no need for the writer to make this information explicit for them.

However, when we translate the Bible into a modern language, most of our readers will not know what these places are. The information that was present for the original readers is missing for our modern readers. It is no longer implicit for them. In order for our modern readers to understand the same information that the original Bible readers understood, we will often need to make this information explicit. Instead of "Shiloh", we may need to say "the town Shiloh". Instead of "Tigris", we may need to say "the River Tigris", and so on. Only then will our readers have the full understanding that the Bible writer expected his readers to have.

13.3 Language differences

Each language has its own rules of grammar. This does not mean that some scholar has written a book telling people how they must speak that language. It means that as people grow up speaking a language, they learn the correct way to speak. They naturally follow the rules of their own language, rules which allow speakers of that language to understand clearly what they mean when they speak to each other.

One of the significant ways that the rules of one language differ from the rules of another language is in what can be left explicit and what must be made implicit. For example, you might be wondering what happened to the food you left with me to take to your mother in the hospital. In English I might say,

"I've already taken it to her."

However, in Thai I might say,
 "aw paj hāj léew."
 The Thai is literally 'take go give finish'.

There are very great differences in these two sentences between what is explicit and what is implicit. In English the various objects being talked about are all explicitly mentioned:

me	"I"
the food	"it"
your mother	"her"

In Thai, every one of these items has been left implicit. None of them have to be mentioned, but the hearer will know exactly who did the taking, what was taken, and who it was given to, because the context in which the sentence is spoken makes all of this implicit.

On the other hand, in Thai the various actions involved are described quite explicitly. There are separate words for the action of "taking", the action of "going", and the action of "giving". In English, the single word "taken" is used, but all of the separate actions are nevertheless implicitly understood from what is said.

Someone translating from Thai to English would have to be careful to make all of the objects (none of which are explicitly mentioned in Thai) explicit in English. But someone translating from English to Thai would need to think about the different steps involved in the action, and make each of them explicit. But if they want the sentence to sound natural in Thai, they would also have to leave many of the elements of the English sentence *implicit*. A good translator will understand that the correct Thai translation has to leave those items implicit, and not think that they must be left in the Thai sentence just because they are explicitly there in the original English.

As this example shows very clearly, each language tends to make certain things explicit and allows other things to be left implicit. This is an area of great importance to translators, so let us now look at some of the different aspects of meaning which languages may give particular attention to.

13.3.1 Directionals

Jonah 1.3 says that Jonah went *down*. But many directionals are left implicit in the original languages of the Bible, because the people knew the geography well. So we are not told that Jonah went west to Tarshish and north or east to Nineveh. Most Hebrew readers knew these directions, so the writers did not need to mention them. But when we translate into modern languages, we may need to make the directions explicit.

In Melpa, a language of Papua New Guinea, the speakers refer to the four directions in situations which are very surprising for speakers of many other languages:

"I'm going south to Hagen (a city)."
 "They went into that house just over there to the east."
 "Please go and sit over there to the north."
 "Could you hand me that bag just to your west."

English is also a language that makes regular use of directionals. Words like 'up', 'down', and 'over' are very common in spoken English. If I am in Singapore, I might talk about going up to Bangkok, over to Manila, or down to Jakarta. But these terms are not used only for geographical directions. It is common to hear sentences like, "Please get down the box from up over the washing machine."

The meaning and use of words like 'come' and 'go' is very specific to each language, and it is not always easy to work out the details. This is something that speakers of a language do without thinking about it, and when we do try to think about it, it is not always easy to work out the rules accurately. However, the important point for us as translators is to recognize that when we see

words meaning "come" and "go" in another language, we should not assume that they should always be translated by the same words in our language. We need to understand clearly the situation that is being described and then use the words in our own language that will give the correct meaning.

For example, Acts 8.27 mentions an Ethiopian official who was on his way home after a trip to Jerusalem to worship God. The Greek uses the word 'erchomai', which is usually translated by 'come' in English, and the NRSV translates that the man "had come to Jerusalem to worship God." In English it is acceptable to use "come" here, because the man had come from his own country a long way away and was still in the land of Israel. However, in other languages it would not make sense to say "come" here, because the man has already left Jerusalem and traveled some distance away. Some Indonesian translations of this verse use the Indonesian word 'pergi' 'to go', and say that the man had gone to Jerusalem to worship.

In order to translate our own language in a way which uses directionals naturally, we may have to discover information that is implicit in the original languages. The Hebrew or Greek text itself does not always make the information we need explicit but there is often a way to find what we need in order to translate accurately into our own language. For example, we may need to study a good map of the Holy Land. At other times it is just a matter of studying the situation carefully so that we are really clear what is happening in the text. Only then can we reproduce it in a meaningful way in our own language.

In Ruth 1.1, the text tells us about a family that leaves Bethlehem in Judah and moves to the country of Moab. If our language requires us to give some information about the direction that they traveled, we see that this information is not made explicit in the original text. The best way for us to find this information is to look at a map.

When people in Israel were traveling to Jerusalem, it was customary to say that they were going 'up to Jerusalem'. Jerusalem is built on high ground, so that travelers approaching Jerusalem from almost any direction do go up as they get near the city. However, even when people were traveling from far away and there might be a lot of going up and going down on the journey, it was said that they were "going up to Jerusalem". Examples of this are in 2 Kings 24.10, Ezra 1.3, Matthew 20.17-18, Luke 2.22, John 2.13, and Galatians 1.17-18. In Matthew 20.17, for example, the road at that particular point could have been level or even going downhill. But since Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, the Greek text says that he "was going up." Translators in some languages may have to change this expression to fit the rules of their languages, at least in certain contexts.

13.3.2 Pronouns

One important way that languages differ from one another is in the way they refer to the people who act as participants in discourses in that language. It is usual for participants to be referred to by particular words known as *pronouns*. After a participant or group of participants has been identified in some way in a discourse, pronouns can then be used to refer to that participant or group.

Pronouns are distinguished in almost all languages by *person* and *number*. *Person* is usually divided into *first person*, *second person*, and *third person*. 'First person' refers to the speaker or to a group that includes the speaker ('I', 'we'). 'Second person' refers to the person or persons spoken to ('you'). 'Third person' refers to others ('he', 'she', 'it', 'they'). *Number* refers to the number of people being referred to. The most common types of number are *singular*, referring to just one person, and *plural*, referring to more than one.

The things that have been said so far are true of most languages, and it might therefore seem that languages are very similar in their pronoun systems. However, there are actually many variations possible.

For example, some languages have a distinction between 'first person inclusive' (me and you and maybe others) and 'first person exclusive' (me and others, but not you). Other languages have a 'fourth person' as well as a third person, which means that they have ways of referring easily to two different participants in the discourse. In other languages again, there are distinctions in number, so that in addition to singular and plural there may also be 'dual', referring to two participants, or a 'trial', referring to three participants. Some languages also distinguish in 'plural' between large groups and small groups.

An example of a language with a very complicated pronoun system is Ambai, a language spoken on Yapen Island, Irian Jaya, Indonesia. Ambai has the following pronouns, distinguished by person and number:

number:		1	1	2	3
		(exclusive)	(inclusive)		
person:	singular	yau	*	wau	i
	dual	auru	turu	muru	uru
	trial	antoru	totoru	muntoru	itoru
	plural	amea	tata	mea	ea

[Notes: (1)The distinction between inclusive and exclusive only applies when there is more than one, so it is impossible to have an 'inclusive singular' form (*).

(2)The pronouns listed here are the forms used for free pronouns. The language has other forms used as prefixes for verbs.]

Person and number are common distinctions in languages, but they are not the only distinctions that can be made in pronoun systems. Many languages also distinguish *gender*, that is, words are classified according to whether they are masculine, feminine, or sometimes neuter. Or else languages may divide the world in other ways, so that there may be different classes of nouns. In English, gender is limited to third person singular ('he', 'she', 'it'), but in Biblical Hebrew, masculine and feminine is distinguished in all persons and numbers except first person. So Hebrew has different words for 'you', and 'they' depending on whether the pronoun refers to males or females.

This issue becomes very important for translators working in languages which require distinctions which the source languages do not make. Notice the word 'require'. If a pronoun system has a distinction, for example, between dual and plural, or a distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person, that means that the translator must make a decision in every single instance where such a distinction is possible. Sometimes it is possible to be quite sure of the right meaning, because the information is clearly implicit in the Bible text.

Let us look, for example, at some Bible passages. Genesis 22.3 says that Abraham took his son Isaac and two men with him and set out. In verse 5, Abraham speaks to the men. He says first, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there; we will worship, and then we will come back to you." Let us imagine that this is being translated into a language which has a distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person, and also a distinction between dual and plural. When Abraham says "we will worship", it will be necessary to use the exclusive dual form for "we", because "we" refers to two people (Abraham and Isaac) and the two men that Abraham is speaking to are not included in the worship. Dual will also be used for "you" at the end, since it refers to only two men. Although Hebrew does not make these distinctions, the context still makes clear which forms are called for.

In 1 Samuel 2.22-25, the text says that Eli heard bad reports about his sons and then spoke to them. There is nothing in these verses to tell us how many sons Eli had, but this information has

already been given in 1 Samuel 1.3. There were two sons. Therefore, if a language has a dual form, it should be used in all references to Eli's sons.

1 Samuel 14.6-12 reports an incident involving Jonathan and his armor-bearer. As they speak to each other, "we" and "us" would be dual and inclusive in languages that make those distinctions. In verse 10, Jonathan refers to the Philistine soldiers and says, "If they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up." "They" would be plural, referring to the Philistines. "Us" also refers to the Philistines, and would be plural exclusive. However, "we" refers again to Jonathan and his armor-bearer, so it would be dual inclusive.

These examples show that it is often easy enough for translators to find the information they need to make the distinctions that their languages require. But at other times it can be very difficult for translators to make a clear decision. Nevertheless, whether the information is explicit or clearly implicit, or whether it is very difficult to work it out, translators in these languages must still make a decision in every single case.

The only way that translators can do this effectively is to try to understand the situation being discussed as carefully as possible and then to make a decision one way or the other. It is probably true that in many cases it does not really matter which way the idea is expressed. In other places, however, it may involve significant distinctions. For example, Philemon 1.2 mentions "our sister Apphia" and "our fellow-soldier Archippus". Do these "our" include Philemon or not? An inclusive pronoun is used in Indonesian, but an exclusive pronoun is used in Tok Pisin (from Papua New Guinea). However, Tok Pisin manages to partially include Philemon by referring to Archippus as a person who is "a fellow soldier of ours (not including Philemon) in this battle of God's that we (including Philemon) are all fighting".

13.3.3 Grammatical distinctions in the verbs

Another type of grammatical system which makes languages very different from each other is the tense system. For example, in English almost every time we use a verb it must be marked as "past", "present", or "future". "Past" in English begins just before this moment and extends back to the creation of the world. Other languages, however, may divide up the past in different ways. A distinction between "recent past" and "remote past" is quite common. Some languages (such as Gogodala of Papua New Guinea) add another form for events that took place earlier today. Tabo, another Papua New Guinea language, has different forms depending on whether events being talked about took place during the day or night!

Distinctions of tense are quite common, but other languages also build into their verbs information of quite different kinds. For example, verbs may be marked for how confident we can be about the information being reported. In Huli, another Papua New Guinea language, there can be at least four ways of reporting that "the plane landed":

- gurunu ibiya (I know because I saw it land)
- gurunu ibayua (I know because I heard it land)
- gurunu ibiyida (I assume it has landed, because I see
evidence of it --- such as the passengers
walking home from the airstrip)
- gurunu ibiyiya (I heard it or saw evidence, but did not
actually see it)

Biblical Hebrew and many other languages (probably including Biblical Greek, although this a matter that scholars are still debating) make grammatical distinctions in the verb not based on tense but on *aspect*. Aspect refers to the nature of an action rather than when it took place. For example, was it a completed act or a continuing action? For Biblical Hebrew, the form traditionally known as "perfect" describes an action that is complete in itself, regardless of whether it occurred in the past or will occur in the future. The so-called "imperfect" refers to an action that is a continuing one or to an action that recurs repeatedly.

As with the pronoun systems that we discussed earlier, translators have no choice but to make use of the distinctions which their language requires. It is important that they understand the significance of these distinctions and try to translate as accurately as possible. As with the pronouns, the necessary information is often implicit in the text even if it is not stated explicitly. But there will also be many cases where the source text does not give clear guidance about the correct decision to make. Translators must make a decision based on as full an understanding of the text as they can get.

13.3.4 Word meanings

It is very often true that translators are forced to choose between a set of words in their language which carry somewhat different meanings from the similar set of words in the source language. For example, different cultures have quite different ways of referring to brothers and sisters. In Hebrew, Greek, and English, it is the gender of the person which is important. The word 'brother' or 'sister' tells us nothing about which of the two is older or younger. In other languages, the relative age may be important, with no distinction based on gender. In many languages, there may be a set of four terms, divided both by gender and by relative age.

In Genesis 27.30 we read that "as soon as Jacob left, his brother Esau came in from hunting." Neither the Hebrew nor the English of this verse tells us explicitly which of the two is the older. However, we have plenty of other information about these two brothers and it is clearly implicit (and very important) in the context that Esau is the older brother. Translators in many languages will have to make this information explicit by the word they use for "brother" in this verse.

However, in other situations, the context may not be completely clear. The information was not important in the Biblical language and therefore it has not been made clear in the text, even implicitly. So, for example, when we read about "Simon and his brother Andrew" in Mark 1.16 or "two other brothers, James and John" in Mark 1.19, then in languages which require a choice of term based on relative age, each translator has to finally decide which is the older and which is the younger brother. It is sometimes thought that the one named first in lists is likely to be the older one, and if translators have no other information, this is a good rule to follow.

Translators face many problems of this kind, but this general problem is dealt with in more detail in the section on semantic domains.

13.3.5 Chains of reference

We have already mentioned the different ways in which languages use pronouns to refer to participants in a discourse. However, there is another aspect of this question which we also need to look at. Once a particular participant has been introduced into a discourse, that participant can be referred to any number of times. Participants come and go in discourses like characters in a drama. But whenever particular participants are "on stage", different languages have different ways of keeping track of them. The different ways of referring to a particular character can be thought of as a line going through the discourse. Each character has its own line, and each line can be called a *chain of reference*.

Let us look at Acts 3.1-8, using the TEV translation as an example. In verse 1 we are introduced to Peter and John. Peter, of course, was the main character in chapter 2, but the last verses of chapter 2 were more general, so Peter is being introduced again, for the sake of this new event. This is first time John has been mentioned in Acts except for when his name was given in a list of the disciples in 1.13.

In verse 2 there are three new participants or groups. First, we meet the lame man. Then we are told that this man "was carried" to the gate to beg. The people who carried him are not mentioned explicitly, but they are definitely implicit participants in the story, and in some languages they would have to be mentioned explicitly. Finally, there are "the people going into the Temple."

When we are introduced to the lame man, we are basically given four bits of information about him. 1) When he is first introduced, the text describes him as "a man who had been lame all his life". 2) We are told that he was "there at the gate". Since he was lame, we assume that this means that he was sitting beside the road. 3) We are told that every day he was carried to the gate. Since he has already been mentioned, this time the text does not say "the lame man". He is referred to with a third-person pronoun, "he". 4) Finally, we are told that he begs for money from the passers-by. This time how is he referred to? Because of English grammar, he can be left implicit in this third reference. The text does not say "the lame man begged" or even "he begged". It says only "to beg". We know that it is the lame man who is begging, but he is not explicitly mentioned at this point of the text.

At this point, the lame man is clearly the main character in the story. Therefore, we know exactly who is referred to at the beginning of verse 3 when the text says "when he saw". However, since Peter and John have not been mentioned since verse 1, their names are given in full again in verse 3. In the second part of the verse, the lame man is called "he", but this time Peter and John can be referred to with a pronoun: "he begged them". What does he want them to do? "To give him something." The lame man is again referred to with a pronoun, "him".

English readers will clearly understand that the main participants in this story are, first, the lame man (who can be called "he" or "him" with no confusion) and, second, Peter and John (who can be clearly referred to with "they" or "them"). Eventually Peter becomes the speaker and in verse 7, "he" is used to refer to Peter. However, "him" and "his" still clearly refer to the lame man. Nevertheless, in English it seems helpful to use the noun again ("the man's feet and ankles") at the end of verse 7, because there is a possibility of confusion at this point in the text, since two separate participants are being referred to with third person singular pronouns.

Finally, in verse 8, we are told that "he jumped up" (a pronoun), "stood on his feet" (the man is only implicit here), and "started walking around" (again, the man is not mentioned explicitly, but English readers have no trouble knowing who the text is talking about).

In these verses we are therefore mainly dealing with three people: the lame man, Peter, and John. The lame man is mentioned most often, sometimes with a noun, often with a pronoun, and sometimes with nothing at all. In this last group of references, we can say that he is "understood" from the context, or implicit. Peter is sometimes mentioned together with John and sometimes mentioned alone. John is mentioned only together with Peter. But sometimes they are called by their names and sometimes they are referred to by pronouns. We could make a diagram showing the way the different characters participate in the action of the story. Each time one of the characters is a participant we could put a circle. If we join all of the circles for one character, we have a "chain of reference" for that character.

The important thing for us to recognize is that every time there is a circle for a particular character, that character is a participant in the discourse. However, the way a character is referred to in the text at each point will depend partly on the rules of the language and partly on the style of the writer. Translators must be very careful not to simply follow the pattern of their source languages. They must understand the discourse clearly enough that they can recognize each point where a character is a participant. But whether they mention that character with a name, or a noun, or a pronoun, or whether they leave that character implicit, all of this should be determined completely by what is good style and makes sense in their own language. If this is done well, it almost certainly means that translators will find that there is a regular pattern of changes. Characters who are explicit in the source language will sometimes be made implicit in the language of the translation, and characters who are only implicit in the source language will sometimes be referred to explicitly in the language of the translation.

Notice how even in English, the pattern of when a character is implicit and explicit can be different from one translation to another:

Acts 3.8:

TEV he jumped up, stood on his feet, and started walking around
 NRSV jumping up, he stood and began to walk

Greek grammar is quite different from English, and in the Greek of this verse the man is never referred to by either a noun or a pronoun, but only by the endings of the verbs.

This is one quick way to test a translation for whether it is too literal or not. If any translation closely follows the source text in the places it uses nouns, when it uses pronouns, and when it leaves a character implicit, we can say quite confidently that that translation is too literal. The translator does not yet understand correctly how to translate, because the rules of the translator's language concerning how to refer to participants are surely quite different from the rules of the source language.

There is one practical issue related to this that modern translators should keep in mind. Translations today are almost always divided into sections, and each section is given a separate title or section heading. Since the text is conveniently laid out in this way, it means that when people read the Bible, whether in church or individually, they very often read a particular section or sections. It is therefore helpful to the readers if translators make clear at the beginning of each section who the participants are. If a reader has read through from the previous section, it might be sufficient to use pronouns to refer to some of the characters. But it is better to use names or nouns at the beginning of each new section, for the sake of readers who begin their reading at that point.

13.3.6 Passives

A passive refers to a sentence where the character doing the action is not necessarily mentioned, but only the character or things that experience the action. For example, I might see an action which I could describe as "the man beat the dog". However, if my main interest is in what happened to the dog, or if for any reason I do not want to mention the man, I can use a passive sentence and say "the dog was beaten". This sentence clearly implies that someone did this action, but it does not tell us who this someone was.

Languages differ a great deal from each other in the way that they use passive sentences. In fact, even within one language there can be a lot of difference in the way the same basic ideas can be expressed, sometimes using passive sentences and sometimes not.

Daniel 1.5 provides an interesting example. In the TEV, this verse reads:

The king also gave orders that every day they were to be given the same food as the members of the royal court. After three years of this training, they were to appear before the king.

As this verse is translated here, "they were to be given the same food" is put into a passive form. "They" here refers to the young Israelite men who were selected for training. The king's orders mention the kind of food these men are supposed to eat, but exactly who gives them this food is left implicit. Presumably it refers to some of the palace servants.

Compare this translation with the NRSV's rendering of the same verse:

The king assigned them a daily portion of the royal rations of food and wine. They were to be educated for three years, so that at the end of that time they could be stationed in the king's court.

The NRSV is able to mention the young men's food without using a passive or even raising the question of who will give it to them. However, the NRSV uses a passive in the second sentence, "They were to be educated", where the TEV did not use a passive. Again, the focus is on the

education, and the people providing the education are left implicit. The REB manages to translate the verse without any passive at all.

Indonesian happens to be a language which makes extensive use of passive forms. In this same verse, Today's Indonesian (BIS) uses two passive forms. It mentions "food which is prepared for the king's family" and "after they are trained for three years". Again, the people who prepare the food and do the training are left implicit.

The question of when passives should be used and when not is a very complex one and we do not need to go into that here. There are just two important points to make. First, translators should try to use passives in the ways that are appropriate and give the correct meaning in their own languages, and not simply follow what is in the source language text.

Second, whenever it is necessary in translation to change a passive form into an active, it will often be necessary to make clear who is doing the action. This will mean that the translator must study the source language text to work out precisely who the implicit actor is. Some languages seem to prefer to use passives very rarely, and there are some languages that do not have passive forms at all. In such cases translators will have to use active forms, which often requires that the actor be identified in some way. In Daniel 1.5, mentioned above, the people who give the young men their food and who teach them would presumably be the servants or officials of the king.

One famous problem related to passives is found especially in the Gospel of Matthew, where it is often assumed that Matthew followed the Jewish custom of using passives in order to avoid referring to God. In many cases in the Greek text, when an actor is not mentioned, the implied actor is God himself. These are sometimes known as "divine passives".

Some of the best known examples of these "divine passives" are found in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5. "They will be comforted" (Matthew 5.4) is translated as an active in TEV: "God will comfort them." "They shall be satisfied" (Matthew 5.6) is "God will satisfy them fully". "Mercy shall be shown to them" (Matthew 5.7) is "God will be merciful to them". And "they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5.9) is "God will call them his children."

There are many other examples of divine passives in Matthew and in other parts of the Bible, which translators will meet in the course of their work. The important question each translator should ask is this. The original readers presumably understood this structure and knew that God was implicitly the actor in this sentence. Can the readers of the translation be expected to understand this? The answer will usually be "No", and in that case, it will usually be best to make it explicit that God is the subject of these sentences.

13.4 Broader questions

The types of examples we have been looking at so far are often related to the rules of different languages. In many cases, translators will have no choice but to make explicit things which were only implicit in the original languages. However, there are many other situations where translators should also be aware of information that is only implicit in the source language, because it may improve their translations considerably if they make some of this information explicit.

13.4.1 Making actions clear

In an example already mentioned earlier, we saw that in a situation where English can use a single verb "take" (something to someone), Thai might prefer to divide the total event into smaller segments and say "take go give". If translators are sensitive to the ways their own languages prefer to express situations, they may often find situations like this. That is, there may be a series of events mentioned in the source language where certain actions are left implicit. But in the translation, readers may be confused or they may find the wording awkward if the implicit event is not made explicit.

Let us look at some examples. Jonah 1.5-7 tells of the various events that happened on board Jonah's ship when the terrible storm came upon it. In verse 5 we are told that at first Jonah was sleeping in the hold of the ship. In verse 6, the captain sees Jonah and speaks to him. In verse 7, the sailors are casting lots. What actions have been left implicit in this sequence of events?

First, we assume that the captain had to wake Jonah up before speaking to him. Of course, it could be that the captain's words themselves were enough to wake Jonah up. Nevertheless, this could be an issue in some languages. Some people might say, "What is the point of talking to someone who is sleeping?" If that is a problem, we can say that the Bible text clearly implies that Jonah heard what the captain said. If it is necessary to say that the captain first woke him up, there is no problem in making that point explicit.

However, there is a more serious problem for some languages. The action of verse 6 takes place in the hold of the ship, where as far as we know only Jonah and the captain are present. But verse 7 talks as though all the people on the ship were suddenly in the same place. Where does verse 7 take place? Should we assume that suddenly all of the sailors came down into the hold and joined Jonah and the captain? Or does the text imply that Jonah and the captain went back up on deck before the sailors cast their lots?

It seems clear that the Hebrew means for us to understand that in response to the captain's words, Jonah went up on deck, and presumably the captain went there, too. So in verse 7, we can assume that everyone is on the deck, or at least not in the hold. If it is necessary to make this explicit in order to make the story clear in any language, the translator should feel free to do it. The translator is adding nothing to the meaning of the text, but only making explicit what is implied.

There is a similar problem in Leviticus 4.7. At the beginning of this verse the priest is using a bull's blood to carry out certain ritual actions inside the tent of meeting. However, the text tells us that the priest must pour the remainder of the blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering. But this altar is outside the tent. In many languages it would sound much better to make the implied action explicit and say something like, "He must then take the remainder of the blood outside of the tent and pour it..."

In Matthew 26.19, we are told that Jesus' disciples went to a certain man's house in Jerusalem to get the Passover meal ready. It is clear in verse 19 that Jesus himself is not with them. Yet in verse 20, we are told that in the evening Jesus sat down at the meal with the disciples. It is obviously implied that Jesus came to the house first, and in some languages it is very confusing if this information is not made explicit. There is the same problem in Luke 22.13-14, except that in Luke we are also told that the room is upstairs. It may therefore be necessary to say that Jesus came to the house and came up to the room before sitting down to eat.

13.4.2 Implicit characters

We have already seen that it may sometimes be necessary to make actions implicit if the text is going to be clear in certain languages. There are many situations where it will be necessary to make characters (that is participants or actors) explicit, as well.

Think about the English sentence "Help is needed." What does this sentence mean, and how would it have to be translated in other languages? In order to answer those questions, it is necessary to know about whom the sentence is talking. There are at least two characters "hidden" in the meaning of the words. These implicit characters will often need to be made explicit in translation. "Help is needed" implies a sequence of three actions:

- 1) Some person or persons wants to do some action.
- 2) That person or person is not able to do the action.
- 3) Some other person or persons must help so that the action can be done.

Thus, when we say that there are at least two implied characters, one is the person wanting to do something and the second is the person who will help.

Think of another sentence: "In the last five years, there has been more and more corruption in this province." What does this sentence imply?

- 1) Some person or persons holds office, perhaps a government office.
- 2) That person is using the power of the office illegally for their own advantage.
- 3) Usually "their own advantage" involves getting money, through such things as the misuse of funds or expecting bribes. If bribes are involved, this implies the person giving the bribes as well as the person accepting them.

The value of this kind of detailed analysis is that it helps a translator to feel confident about the meaning of a text. If the text really implies that there are certain people involved in the action, then it is perfectly all right to make those people explicit in the translation.

Other examples of sentences with implicit participants are:

"We suffered a great defeat."

"A teacher expects complete attention."

An example from the Bible is Jonah 3.5, where NRSV translates, "The people of Nineveh proclaimed a fast." In order to translate the concept "a fast" into another language, it may well be necessary to mention that this refers to people who are not going to eat food. TEV makes the actors explicit: "they decided that everyone should fast".

Three verses later, in Jonah 3.8 NRSV has, "All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands." What is meant by "the violence that is in their hands"? If "violence" is the right word here (other translations use "injustice" and "wicked behavior"), it implies that they are doing things which hurt other people. These other people may need to be made explicit in a translation.

13.4.3 Honorifics

Many languages have highly developed ways for showing how different characters relate to each other socially. If people speaking to each other do not use the expected forms, their speech may seem abrupt and rude. It may even be very insulting. These systems for showing respect and social relationships are often called *honorific systems* or just *honorifics*. People making translations into languages which use honorifics need to build the appropriate honorifics into the direct speech of the characters in the text.

We can see a little of this in the Bible languages and in English, especially when someone is speaking to a very important person, such as a king. In such a situation in Hebrew, for example, the speaker often calls himself "your servant". This relationship can be expressed in English by the speaker calling the king, "Your Majesty." We see examples of both of these forms in Nehemiah 2.5. NRSV has the more literal "if your servant has found favor with you". REB and TEV do not use "your servant", which is not natural in modern English, but both of them do use "Your Majesty".

However, in languages with highly developed honorific systems, it will be necessary to use honorifics in many places where there is nothing like them in the source languages. How can a translator do this? This is in fact a very complex matter which deserves special attention of its own. However, the basic approach the translator must take is to study the text carefully to see what clues the text itself provides regarding the relationship of the two people who are speaking to each other. By "reading between the lines", translators may be able to find enough implicit information that they can make honorifics explicit in a way that faithfully reflects the relationship of the Bible characters as well as being faithful to the requirements of their own languages. For further discussion of this area see section 9.2.5.

13.5 Cultural background

One very important type of implicit information involves information related to the cultural background of the original readers. Because of the way things and concepts were used in their culture, a particular word will often have special meanings for them which it does not have for us. Because this information was shared by the members of that culture, there was no reason for it to be made explicit. It was implicitly present in the message. But when we translate for members of our own cultures, we will often find that we need to add certain words to bring out the full and correct meaning.

13.5.1 Mark 15.46: the stone

A very simple example is found in Mark 15.46: "he rolled a stone across the entrance of the tomb." The people of that period were familiar with caves used as tombs and the kinds of large stone that would be used to cover the entrance. But if we are translating for people who have never seen such a tomb, they may not understand the purpose of the action. Why would someone roll a stone across the entrance of the tomb? Was it some sort of superstitious act? If there is any confusion, we need to think about the implicit information that may be missing for our people:

- a) the purpose was to close the entrance---the stone was used as a door
- b) the stone was fairly flat, but circular, so that it could be rolled on its edge (usually there was a sort of track for rolling the stone)
- c) the stone was very large, and heavy (notice in Mark 16.3 that the women did not think they would be able to move the stone by themselves, even though there were three of them).

It is of course not necessary to go into great detail about this in our translation, but we will find that one or two carefully chosen words can bring out the correct meaning very easily. Notice how both TEV and CEV say "a large stone" in English. This is certainly a possible first step. One could also add something to show that the purpose was to close the entrance of the tomb. If necessary, we could even say: "There was a large circular stone standing there as a door for the tomb. He rolled this stone and closed the tomb." The main point is that this is the actual meaning of the original text, although part of this meaning is left implicit. If we have to make any of this explicit, we are simply translating accurately. We are not adding anything to the text.

13.5.2 Matthew 27.27-29: Jesus as king

Let us look now at a more complicated example, from Matthew 27.27-29. Look at the wording in the NIV:

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then they twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews," they said.

What is happening here? Why did the soldiers choose these three actions to do to Jesus before they mocked him? Why did they put the scarlet robe on him, why did they put the thorns on his head, and why did they put the staff in his right hand? The meaning of these actions was so obvious to the original readers that there was no need to make it explicit. But many readers today will find these actions strange and perhaps meaningless. Translators may need to make some of this information explicit.

The basic point of the soldiers' actions is that they were pretending to treat Jesus as a king. The color scarlet refers to a bright red color which was connected especially with kings. A scarlet robe is therefore a robe such as a king might wear. The thorns that are mentioned next apparently came from some kind of vine which had thorns on it. The soldiers took parts of this vine and twisted them into the shape of a crown, such as a king might wear, and put it on Jesus' head. Of course the thorns would cause the "crown" to be painful to Jesus at the same time as adding to his "kingly appearance". Finally, the soldiers put a staff (a long stick) in Jesus' right hand. Again, this was

supposed to represent a king's sceptre (the main place in the Bible where we see the importance of a sceptre is in Esther 4.11, 5.2, and 8.4).

After making Jesus look like a king, then the soldiers knelt down in front of him, using the same action people would use if appearing before a king, and they greeted him with words such as one might use to greet a king. Since they did not really believe that Jesus was a king, all of this was done just to make fun of Jesus, or to mock him, as the NIV says.

Notice that the whole point of this series of actions is to mockingly treat Jesus as a king. This point is not made explicit in the Greek text, because it was so obviously implicit for the original readers. But if it is not obvious for our readers, we have not translated correctly. We must translate in a way to make clear to our readers the motivation for the soldiers' acts.

There are many ways in which this information could be made explicit, and it is impossible to give suggestions which will fit every case. However, there are two main approaches that translators could consider. First is to make the information explicit in the translation itself. Perhaps something like this:

27 Then Pilate's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's palace and the whole company gathered around him. 28 They stripped off his clothes and put a red robe on him, such as a king might wear. 29 They took thorny branches and twisted them into the shape of a king's crown and set it on his head. They put a long stick in his right hand, to look like a king's sceptre. Then they made fun of him by bowing down in front of him and saying, "Hail, king of the Jews."

The second option for translators is to add a footnote explaining to the readers exactly what the purpose was of each of the soldiers' acts. However, this is a situation where it should not be difficult to include the information in the text of the translation itself, and that is probably the best way to handle these verses. If the text itself is clear, then all readers will immediately understand the point, not only the few readers who take the trouble to read the footnotes. It will also make the meaning clear for people who only hear the text being read and who do not actually have the books to refer to.

13.5.3 Jonah 1.1-3: Tarshish

Let us look at another example, from the Old Testament:

Jonah 1.1-3 (NRSV)

1 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying, 2 "Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

The implicit cultural information in this passage concerns Tarshish. Tarshish is sometimes connected with Spain, but in fact for the Hebrew people the exact location was not significant. It was a land far away across the sea to the west. Its significance was that it was the most distant place known to the Hebrews. We can see the place it has in their thinking in passages like Psalm 72.8-11 and Isaiah 66.18-19. In both of these passages the point is that the whole earth (as far as it was known to peoples of the Bible lands at that time) is being described. Psalm 72 is a prayer for the king, praying for things far beyond what anyone expected would really be possible, unless the prayer is applied to the Messiah. Verse 5 prays, "May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon." Verse 8 then goes on, "May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." Verse 10 then mentions various places connected with "the ends of the earth", and Tarshish is one of these.

In Isaiah 66.18-19 the Lord is speaking about the Day of his Judgement. He says (according to the NRSV), "I am coming to gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and shall see my glory." Then in verse 19 a number of distant nations are mentioned, including Tarshish.

The most common way in which Tarshish is mentioned in the Old Testament is in the expression "ships of Tarshish". This is an idiomatic expression referring to large cargo ships able to sail great distances, as we can see in passages like 1 Kings 10.22, Psalm 48.7, Isaiah 2.16, Ezekiel 27.25, and in other places.

This is the background and understanding that a Hebrew reader would have had when hearing that Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord. Not only was Tarshish one of "the ends of the earth", but it was far across the sea to the west. Nineveh, on the other hand, was across the land to the north and east. In other words, Jonah was setting out in exactly the opposite direction from which he should have gone.

But we can say more than this. Jonah 1.3 mentions twice that Jonah was trying to flee "from the presence of the Lord." The words used here for "flee" and "presence" are the same words as are used in Psalm 139.7-10:

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

Psalm 139 states very clearly that it is impossible to flee from the presence of the Lord, even if one goes to the "farthest limits of the sea". But as we have seen, that is precisely where the Hebrew people thought Tarshish was located --- at the farthest limits of the sea. In other words, any Hebrew person who knew Psalm 139 would know as soon as he heard about Jonah's plan in Jonah 1.3 that Jonah was foolishly attempting something that was impossible to do. He could of course try to run away from the presence of the Lord. But wherever he went, the Lord's "right hand would hold him fast."

Let us assume that the writer of the book of Jonah purposely chose the words in verse 3 to bring these thoughts to the reader's mind. This important part of the message is not explicit in the text. But it is clearly implied, and therefore still a part of the meaning. Our task as translators then is to somehow share this information with our readers, as well. How can we do that?

The first thing to deal with is Tarshish. As we have seen, the actual name of the place is not so important as what it represented for Hebrew people. Perhaps we could translate verse 3 like this:

But Jonah set out to go as far as he could in the opposite direction, in order to flee from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to the distant port of Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

Such a translation will help our readers to understand the meaning of "Tarshish". But what about the other point, the allusion to Psalm 139? In this case, of course, when our own readers have the full Bible and if they become familiar with Psalm 139, then they themselves may be able to make the connection. However, we should probably do something to help them. The simplest thing to do is to put in a cross-reference to the passage in Psalm 139. Then any who want to look it up will perhaps be able to draw the connection themselves. However, this would also be a good place to use a footnote. One could add a footnote here saying something like this:

Jonah may have believed that he could get away from the presence of the Lord by going to a place like Tarshish, at the far ends of the sea. However, this verse uses words that are chosen to make readers think of Psalm 139.7-10. We should read the rest of this chapter with those verses in mind.

13.5.4 Details in Hebrew texts

One characteristic of Biblical Hebrew is that writers do not usually add unnecessary words just to "set the scene" or to help us to see what a person or place looks like. In this way Hebrew writing is quite different from modern novels. If a word or phrase is included in the Hebrew text, there is often a specific reason for it. This is not so true in Hebrew poetry, because one important characteristic of Hebrew poetry is that it likes to say the same thing in two different ways, in what is called "parallelism". So Hebrew poetry often does include many seemingly unnecessary words. But in ordinary non-poetic Hebrew texts, it is very rare for details to be given just to describe something.

By way of contrast, in English books, when a character is introduced it is common to mention the color of the person's hair or skin or to describe what the person is wearing. Writers will describe the weather on a particular day, tell what buildings look like, and so on. The Hebrew leaves out such information. Therefore, when working with the Hebrew, if we find information that we think is purely descriptive, it is worth asking what the author's motive was for including it. It is quite possible that this word or phrase is implicitly providing information to the Hebrew reader that translators today may need to make explicit.

We do not need to go into great detail with further examples in the way we have with the word Tarshish in Jonah 1.3. However, let us look briefly at a few examples.

1) In Jonah 4.5, why did Jonah go to the *east* of the city?

We may find help with an answer if we look first at Jonah 4.8, then compare it with other verses such as Genesis 41.6, Ezekiel 17.10 and 19.12, and Hosea 13.15.

2) In 1 Samuel 3.3, we are told that the Lord called Samuel when "the lamp of God had not yet gone out" (NRSV).

Apparently each night, enough oil was put in the lamp to allow it to burn all night. The purpose of this information is probably to make the time clear, that is, it was just before dawn (see the TEV translation).

3) In Jeremiah 10.9, the text tells us that the idols are dressed in blue and purple.

This is a passage we might easily think was purely descriptive. However, at the time of the Bible, the dyes required to dye cloth blue or purple were very expensive. The point of this information is not just to tell us the favorite colors of the pagan priests. Instead, it tells us that they dressed their idols in the most luxurious kinds of cloth (note how the verse also mentions silver and gold). The description of Tyre in Ezekiel 27.2-7 also mentions cloth of these colors when describing great luxury.

13.5.5 Symbolic actions

One very important category of cultural background is what we might call "symbolic actions". This refers to particular actions which had a specific cultural meaning. When the text mentions that a person does these particular actions, the original reader would automatically understand the meaning, because it is implicit in the action. However, translators today need to find ways to make explicit what the purpose of the action was.

Look, for example, at the beginning of the story of Joseph. In Genesis 37.29, when Reuben found that Joseph was no longer in the pit, he tore his clothes. Shortly after this, when Jacob learns that Joseph is dead, he also tears his clothes (37.34). People continue tearing their clothes all through the Bible. Look at Genesis 44.13, Numbers 14.6, Joshua 7.6, Judges 11.35, 2 Samuel 1.11, 13.31,

1 Kings 21.27, 2 Kings 2.12, 5.7, 6.30, 11.14, 19.1, 22.11, Esther 4.1, Matthew 26.65, and Acts 14.14.

It is a useful exercise to study the different situations described in these passages and to work out just what is implied by tearing one's clothes. Once that is done, translators should work out a way to make the meaning clear in their own languages. TEV has usually done this. For example, in 2 Samuel 1.11, TEV says "David tore his clothes in sorrow." In 2 Kings 5.7, TEV says "the king of Israel ... tore his clothes in dismay", and 2 Kings 11.14 has "Athaliah tore her clothes in distress." Note that the TEV translators have had to use a variety of English expressions to cover the range of different situations in which people tear their clothes. In other languages, it may be that there will be one term that will cover all of these situations.

In 2 Kings 6.30, when the king of Israel tore his clothes, the people could see that he was wearing sackcloth under his clothes. This rough cloth, used to make sacks for carrying goods (sometimes called gunny sacks today), was worn against the body in times of great sorrow, sometimes because of troubles and sometimes as a sign of repentance. Sometimes, as in Esther 4.1 and 4.3, ashes were also put on the person's head, with a similar meaning. Translators need to be sure that the meaning of these actions is understood by their readers.

In some cultures it may still be true that a person can show honor to a guest by pouring oil on the guest's head. In other cultures, the guest would be greatly offended by such an action! Pouring oil on the head was often used in the Bible as a way of showing that that person was being given an important office, such as priest (Exodus 29.7, Leviticus 8.1-2) or king (1 Samuel 10.1, 2 Kings 9.3). However, it could also be a way of showing honor to a guest, as in Psalm 23.5, 141.5, and Luke 7.46. Sometimes people are told to put oil on their own heads (Ecclesiastes 9.8 and Matthew 6.17). The meaning there is that people should do the things that they usually do in order to look clean and properly dressed (notice how Matthew 6.17 is translated in TEV).

Every culture has many actions which have symbolic meaning, from the way one moves one's eyebrows or fingers to more elaborate actions such as taking off one's shoes and shaking off the dust (Matthew 10.14, Acts 13.51). In most cases the commentaries will give clear explanations of the meanings of these actions in the Biblical context. Translators need to be sure that they understand the meaning in the culture of the Bible, and that this is the meaning that the readers of their translations will understand.

Notice that it is very possible for what seem to be the same actions to have different meanings in different cultures. For example, Jesus' disciples were criticized for eating food without first washing their hands (for example, Matthew 15.2). When I was young, I would also be criticized if I ate without washing my hands. But the meaning in my culture was that there might be dirt on my hands, and I would get sick if I did not clean my hands properly before eating. The Pharisees and scribes, however, were not worried about whether the disciples might make themselves sick by forgetting to wash their hands! It was a matter of ritual cleanliness, and following this custom was considered to be a matter of proper religious behavior.

Similarly, Jesus' disciples were criticized for eating grain as they passed through the fields as they walked along (Matthew 12.1-2). In some cultures today people might indeed criticize them for helping themselves to food from other people's fields. But if anyone understands the problem in this way, they have misunderstood the meaning of the passage. The Pharisees were not worried about the grain. The disciples could legally eat anything they picked with their hands only (Deut. 23:25), so long as they ate it on a different day of the week! The Pharisees' concern was that it was the Sabbath day, and removing the husks from the grain so that it could be eaten was considered to be work, which was forbidden on the Sabbath.

The point of these examples is that translators must be constantly on their guard. People will try to give meaning to the actions that they read about in their translations of the Bible. If the translator

does not find an appropriate way to make explicit what the right meaning is, readers will often assume that a wrong meaning is implicit in the text.

13.6 Background specific to particular people and situations

Let us say that I know that my friend has lost his wallet and that he has been looking everywhere for it. I happen to meet him on the street and I ask him "Have you found it yet?" Anyone who happened to hear my question, but who did not know the background, would be able to guess that my friend had lost something. But they would have no idea what it might be. The wallet is clearly what I am asking about, and my friend will know that as well as I do. But it is not mentioned explicitly in my question. It is only implicit in the meaning of my question.

Notice two important things about this type of implicit meaning. First, it has nothing to do with the culture we are from or the language we are speaking. A person who happened to be an expert on our culture and language would have no way of knowing what "it" was, any more than a person who had no interest in such things. Second, this type of implicit meaning is extremely common in ordinary, everyday speech.

How important this type of meaning is for Bible translators will depend on how careful the Bible writers were when they wrote their books. A carefully developed presentation like the Gospel of Luke will probably have very little of this type of meaning, because the meaning of the text tends to be developed within the text itself. However, it would be surprising if we do not find some of this kind of implicit meaning in the letters of Paul, which were written to specific people about specific situations.

For example, in Philippians 4.2-3 Paul refers to some sort of disagreement between two women. He also asks his "loyal companion" to help these women. Who is this loyal companion of Paul and in what way was this person supposed to help the women? Presumably all of this would have been completely clear to the Philippians when they received the letter, but it is not completely clear to us today.

In Galatians 6.17, Paul says that he carries the marks of Jesus branded on his body. Presumably the Galatians knew what he was talking about when he said that, but even though the commentaries will make many wise suggestions, there is no way that we can be sure now.

What is Paul talking about in 2 Corinthians 13.1-3 when he says that he has already "warned those who sinned previously and all the others" and that if he comes again, he "will not be lenient"? There is a lot of meaning left implicit in these verses.

The commentaries will show that this kind of implicit information is not limited to passing references like these. In some ways it affects our basic understanding of Paul's letters. Who exactly were the people Paul was arguing against in some of his correspondence, and what were these people saying to the Christians? Or, in other cases, what were the questions that the Christians had asked Paul and that he was answering when he wrote his letters? These are extremely important questions, and scholars can make intelligent suggestions about possible answers. But the cause of the problem, the reason for our questions, is precisely because so much of the meaning is left implicit.

When a translator needs to know the answer to such questions in order to translate clearly, the only things to do are to study the context carefully and to review the suggestions that the commentaries make. Then, the translator will have to make the best decision possible in the circumstances. But translators may need this kind of information more often than some people might think. Translators in some languages trying to translate the question about the wallet, "Have you found it?" will need to know first what gender or noun class "it" should be.

13.7 Cautions

It may seem from our discussion of implicit and explicit information that most of the time the translator has to make implicit information explicit in the translation. Because of the nature of language and culture, that will be true in many cases. However, it is important for the translator to recognize that the process sometimes goes in the opposite direction.

13.7.1 Singular and plural

Let us look at a grammatical example first. English is a language in which almost every noun must be marked for singular or plural: either it is a house or it is houses, a cow or cows, a child or children, a prophet or prophets. However, there are many languages which do not ordinarily mark nouns for singular or plural. This information is often given in the context, but it does not have to be made explicit every time the noun is used. In some cases, where there is no interest in the number, the information may not even be given in the context.

Someone translating from English will of course see the information about singular or plural every time they see a noun. But if they feel that they must use some device in their language to show each time whether the noun is singular or plural, the translation is going to sound very unnatural indeed. When translating from English into this kind of language, translators should not bother about the number of the noun in the great majority of cases. This information, which is always made explicit in English, can be left implicit in the translation.

As an example, Mark 5.11 mentions that "there was a large herd of pigs nearby". However this is translated, it should be obvious to the readers that the passage is talking about more than one pig. In verses 12 and 13 the pigs are mentioned again, and in both Greek and English the words referring to the pigs are plural. However, in a language like Thai, where it is not necessary to specify whether a word is singular or plural, it would be correct to simply use the word for "pig" in verses 12 and 13. Any Thai reader will know that the word refers to the large herd mentioned in verse 11. It would be totally unnecessary and against Thai grammar to add other words each time to make clear that the pigs are plural.

13.7.2 Sexual references

Turning now to a quite different way of using language, it seems to be the case that in Hebrew it is perfectly acceptable to talk openly about many sexual actions. This will surely be a problem for many other languages. In this case, where the Hebrew is quite explicit, translators may feel that the expectations of their language and their readers will require that some of these things be handled more indirectly, by making some things implicit.

For example, Hebrew has various expressions which are used to mention that a person had intercourse with his wife. Ordinarily, this detail is mentioned when the main point of the passage is to say that the man and his wife had a child (for example, in Genesis 4.1, 4.17, 4.25, 16.4, 30.4 and many others). However, in many languages it will be quite sufficient just to mention that the man and his wife had a child. The fact that they had intercourse first can quite safely be left implicit!

13.7.3 Cases where information is purposely left implicit

In addition to the various situations where translators may want to make things implicit in their own translations, there are also cases where some people might feel that things should be made explicit, but in fact they should not. This is particularly true in cases where the Bible writer has purposely left some information implicit or avoided mentioning something.

In Isaiah 5.1-7 we find the famous "Song of the Vineyard". In this passage, someone (presumably Isaiah) begins to tell us about his friend, who carefully planted a vineyard (verses 1-2). Then, in verses 3-6, the friend speaks in the first person, complaining about the vineyard, and telling what he is going to do to it because it does not produce the good fruit he expected. Only at the very end of this speech does the friend say, "I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it." Suddenly we realize that this "friend" is the Lord himself. The original speaker then speaks again

in verse 7, confirming that the friend is indeed the Lord, and interpreting the meaning of the rest of the song, as well.

It seems very clear that this song has been very carefully constructed to hide the identity of the friend until the end of the song, giving the whole passage a surprise ending. It is true, of course, that once we have finished reading the whole passage, we know that from the beginning the friend is the Lord. However, it is contrary to the spirit of this passage to tell our readers that it is the Lord before verse 7, when the text tells us directly. Translators should therefore not say at the beginning of verse 3, for example, "Then the Lord said..." In fact, it is probably best to use a more general section heading for this passage, such as TEV's "The Song of the Vineyard", rather than headings such as are used in the French ("The Lord's vineyard") and German common language translations ("God's people --- an unfruitful vineyard"), where the meaning of the passage is given away at the beginning.

Another example is found in John 1. The author is developing a very careful explanation about how the Word is Jesus. However, he purposely refers only to the Word (and the light) at first. It is not until verse 14 that John tells his readers that the Word became a human being. But even then he does not give the name of this person. Only in verse 17 do we finally learn that this person is Jesus Christ. Translators need to faithfully follow John's purpose and plan here. Even though in some senses it may be implicit that Jesus is the one referred to through the whole passage, a translator should not make this information explicit.

Another difficult case is "Son of Man". It seems clear that Jesus liked to refer to himself as "Son of Man". Instead of saying "I", he often referred to himself indirectly in the third person. There is no doubt in these cases that Jesus is referring to himself. Furthermore, there are some parallel passages where one gospel has "Son of Man" and another gospel refers directly to Jesus (for example, compare Mark 8.31 with Matthew 16.21).

Nevertheless, there are other cases where the way Jesus uses "Son of Man" confuses the people listening to him, because it is not immediately clear that he is referring to himself. For example, in John 9.35, Jesus asks the man who had been born blind, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" And the man asks him, "And who is he, sir? Tell me so that I may believe in him." Later again, the crowd asks Jesus, "How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" (John 12.34) But notice that Jesus' words about being lifted up are not in the immediate context of John 12. They come from John 3.14 and 8.28.

It seems clear that it is necessary in at least some passages to find a way to translate "Son of Man" as a third person reference which does not make explicit that it refers to Jesus. But if it has to be done in some passages, it may be better to do it everywhere. Anyway, whatever a translator decides to do in this case, this can at least stand as another warning. There are sometimes very good reasons not to make something explicit.

13.8 Conclusion

The issue of implicit and explicit information is a major aspect of the way language is used. As should be clear from the many aspects of language surveyed above, a large part of the translator's task can be looked at from the perspective of the correct use of implicit and explicit information. Many of the topics that we have looked at are perhaps more usually dealt with from a different perspective, and there is nothing wrong with doing so. However, if we try to see the most important ways in which these topics relate to whether a translation is well done or not, we will often discover that the underlying issue is the correct use of implicit and explicit information.

In summary, it is important to remember that the full meaning of every text or message is made up of two parts. Part of the message is expressed explicitly, through the words chosen and the way they are joined together. But part of the message is left implicit, because of the background of the

listener or reader, or because of the rules of the language, or for various other reasons. When someone wants to translate that message, it is essential to begin with a full understanding of the message, including both what is explicit and what is implicit. Only then can the translator decide how best to express that message in the translation.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT FOURTEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Translating Figurative Language

14.1 Introduction

In all cultures, language can be used in two different ways. In the first place, it is often used literally, where the things that are talked about refer directly to the things those words mean. However, language can also be used in another way, where the words do not refer literally to the things they usually refer to, but are used as pictures and examples of other things.

In John 2.14, the text tells us that when Jesus went into the temple in Jerusalem, he found people there selling various animals and birds. Among the animals being sold there were sheep. The "sheep" mentioned in this verse were literally the animals that the word "sheep" usually refers to.

However, in Mark 14.27 Jesus says, "All of you will run away and leave me, for the scripture says, 'God will kill the shepherd, and the sheep will all be scattered.'" This sentence does not refer to literal sheep at all. The word "sheep" in this verse is a picture of the disciples, describing the way that they will act when their "shepherd" Jesus is taken away from them.

When language is used in this second way, it is called **FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**, and the Bible contains many examples of it.

In one major kind of figurative language, words such as "like" or "as" are used, so that the text shows explicitly that one thing is being compared with another thing. For example, Psalm 19.5 says the sun "comes out in the morning like a happy bridegroom, like an athlete eager to run a race." (TEV) The word "like" is used twice here, showing that the sun is being compared to two different things. Similarly, Lamentations 2.13 says, "Your wound gapes as wide as the ocean." (REB) Here the word "as" shows that we are dealing with a comparison. This kind of figurative language, where the comparison is explicitly marked, is called a **simile**. In English similes nearly always use either the word "like" or the word "as" to make the comparison.

Look again at the example above from Mark 14.27. Although this is clearly figurative language, the words "like" or "as" do not appear. People are being spoken of directly as if they were sheep. This is an example of a **metaphor**, in which a word or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable.

14.2 Aspects of figurative language

In order to understand more clearly the way that figurative language works, it is useful to distinguish three different aspects of it. First, there is the thing being talked about. We can call this the **object** of the figurative language. Second, there is the thing that the object is being compared to. We can call this the **comparison**. Finally, there is a feature of the comparison which is said to also be true of the object. We can call this the **similarity**.

For example, Matthew 17.2 says that Jesus' face shone like the sun. In this verse, Jesus' face is the object of the figurative language, and the sun is the comparison. The similarity between the two is the shining. In Exodus 15.5, the text says that Pharaoh's army sank into the depths of the sea like a stone. Here, the object is Pharaoh's army and the comparison is a stone. The similarity is the way that these two very different things sink in water.

We can set up a chart which will clearly show these three aspects of figurative language:

	Object	Comparison	Similarity
Mat 17.2	Jesus' face	sun	shining
Exo 15.5	Egyptian army	stone	sank to the bottom

Other examples can be found in Genesis 3.5, Exodus 24.10, Matthew 10.16, 28.3, John 15.6, and James 1.10. It may be useful to study these passages and to identify each of the three aspects of each example of figurative language.

It is important to note that there is usually just one similarity in a particular example of figurative language. There are of course many things that could be said about the sun that are not true of Jesus' face, just as there are numerous characteristics of a stone which have nothing to do with the Egyptian army. Another way to express this same point is to say that the figurative language used in Matthew 17.2 is not making a general statement that Jesus' face was like the sun. It is saying that Jesus' face was shining in the way that the sun shines.

14.3 Translating figurative language

Will this kind of figurative language be a problem for a translator? Often there will be no problem, but when translating we must always remember a key purpose of figurative language. When figurative language is used, it ordinarily implies that something familiar, something already understood, is being compared in some particular way to something less well known, in order to make clear some feature of the thing that is less well known.

Psalm 68.2 says,

“As smoke is driven away, so drive them away;
as wax melts before the fire, let the wicked perish before God.” (NRSV)

In this verse the Psalmist is trying to make clear the way in which God deals with wicked people. He uses two comparisons for this object, which in this case is an action (God's way of acting toward the wicked). The first comparison is with smoke, which is easily blown away by the wind and seen no more. The second comparison is with wax, which melts when it is heated and flows away. The people of Israel who first heard this Psalm had all seen the wind blowing away smoke, and they had all seen wax melting when heated. These were familiar experiences. By using these experiences as figurative language, the Psalmist can make immediately clear to his listeners how easily God can destroy wicked people.

This is the way in which figurative language typically works, by making use of a comparison which is familiar to people. As long as this comparison is also familiar to the people who will use the translation, there should be no difficulty in using the figurative language in the translation. But there can be a problem if the comparison used in the Bible is something which is unfamiliar or unknown to the readers of the translation. In a case like this, translators might think that they should keep the figurative language just as it was in the original. But if they do this, it will no longer function as effective figurative language for the readers of the translation.

For example, some cultures do not practice winnowing. Since winnowing is mentioned in the Bible, anyone doing a Bible translation in those languages will have to find a way to talk about winnowing. But even though there may be a way to describe it, winnowing will still not be familiar to the users of the translation. Therefore, in cases like Isaiah 41.16, where winnowing is used as a comparison, there will be a problem for anyone translating into the language used by that culture.

There can also be a problem if the comparison itself is known, but in a particular culture it is not thought of as having the quality or characteristic which is being used as the similarity. For example, the people of a particular culture may know both snakes and doves, but they may not think of snakes as particularly wise (or cautious) or of doves as innocent (or gentle). In that case,

someone translating Matthew 10.16 into the language used by that culture would be faced with a translation problem.

When figurative language does present a problem for a translator, how should the translator handle this problem? There are various approaches that can be used. Some of these approaches are more effective than others, but it is not always possible for a translator to find a solution which uses the most effective approaches.

Figurative language usually makes a text lively and interesting. Readers ordinarily appreciate a text which makes effective use of figurative language. Therefore, in order to make the translation just as effective as the original, the translator will also want to make use of figurative language whenever possible. So if there is a problem in translating the figurative language used in the original, a translator may first try to find alternative figurative language which can convey the same idea in a way that will be understood and appreciated by the readers of the translation.

Isaiah 1.18 says, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Scarlet is a deep red dye, and if a white cloth had been dyed with scarlet dye, it would have been very difficult if not impossible in the culture of the Bible to remove the dye so that the cloth was pure white again. In the same way, a person's sins cannot simply be removed or forgotten. But Isaiah here claims that if the people obey God, God will in fact do this seemingly impossible thing. The real comparison in this passage is this difficult change in color from red to white. However, to make the comparison more effective, two secondary comparisons are used, stressing the brightness of the original red color and the pureness of the resulting white. The comparison used for white is "white as snow".

Now, there are many cultures which know nothing of snow. It would certainly be wrong in this passage to try to explain in a translation what snow is so that this comparison can be maintained. Instead, it is better to choose a new comparison which will make clear in an effective way just how pure the white of the first comparison is. Some languages have used clouds and others have referred to the feathers of a particular bird known to be pure white.

Let us say that we decide to change the comparison and say that your sins will become as white as the feathers of bird known in English as the egret. By doing this, we will be accomplishing two good things for the translation. First, we will be using figurative language in a place where figurative language was used in the original. Second, we will be using figurative language correctly, just as it was used in the original. That is, we will be describing something unknown in terms of something already familiar to the reader.

Substituting a new comparison will often provide a good solution to the problem of translating figurative language. However, translators need to be aware that substituting something well known locally for something well known in the culture of the Bible can sometimes cause problems. For example, if the local thing which is substituted is something which readers know was not known in the Bible culture, they may object that the translator is misrepresenting the Bible culture. Egrets and herons are birds that were certainly known in Israel, although the ones found there may not have been pure white as they are in some areas. But there are of course many animals and birds (such as llamas in South America and birds of paradise on the island of New Guinea) which are widely known to be found only in those areas of the world. People may object if animals and birds like these are mentioned in the Bible translation, even if they are only used as comparisons. Obviously, if readers are going to object, translators should not use such items in their translation.

Another type of problem can occur if a translator tries to substitute something that is known in both the translator's culture and the Bible culture, but the cultural meaning of the thing being substituted is quite different in the two cultures. For example, in many parts of the world it is possible to refer very positively to pigs. However, in the Bible culture, pigs were looked upon as

unclean animals. So it would be untrue to the culture of the Bible to refer to a pig as though it was something highly valued.

When translators meet problems translating figurative language, it will often be very good if a local equivalent can be substituted for the problem comparison. However, translators should also consider the overall effect of making the change, and only use it if it does not introduce new problems into the translation.

If a translator has a problem using the comparison used in the Bible text and cannot find a good cultural substitute, what should be done then? In that case, it is important to remember that the main point of the original message is not the comparison being used, but the similarity which is being described. If we cannot find a good comparison to show that sins will be "very white", then the point can still be made by dropping the figurative language completely and just saying "your sins will become pure white." (But note that this still retains an element of figurative language – the association of the colour white with something good. So if this association does not work in the target language, another expression will have to be found.)

When figurative language is changed to ordinary language, the meaning can still be accurately translated, but something is lost from the translation. The style of the translation becomes less interesting and lively for the reader. Hopefully, translators will find opportunities to use figurative language in their translations in places where it is not used in the original, so that the overall effect of the translation is just as interesting as the original.

Translators who are using simple language translations as their source text for translation (for example, the widely used "common language" translations in major languages) should especially be aware that these translations have often used the translation method just described. That is, they have often dropped figurative language and used plain language instead. Only by looking at other translations can translators see that the original language used figurative language in these passages.

For example, in Isaiah 1.20, shortly after the passage about the sins, Isaiah says that if the people will not obey God, they will be eaten by a sword. NRSV translates fairly literally, "you shall be devoured by the sword". TEV, however, drops the figurative language here and says "you are doomed to die". The meaning is correct, and in English the TEV's wording is still quite effective. Nevertheless, in other languages it may be even more effective to use the idea of being "eaten by a sword". But translators who look only at the TEV in this verse would not even know that the original uses figurative language. This is one reason why it is important to refer to several different versions when translating.

14.4 Types of figurative language

So far we have talked as though all figurative language is the same, but there are actually various types of figurative language. The most important distinction is between two types mentioned earlier – **simile** and **metaphor**. The examples that we have described so far have mostly been similes. Similes are examples of figurative language where it is made clear in the text that a comparison is being made. Usually in English, this means that the words "like" or "as" will be used. For example, Psalm 18.33 says, "God ... made my feet like the feet of a deer" (NRSV). REB says, "God makes me swift as a hind", and TEV has "He makes me sure-footed as a deer." Obviously there is a bit of disagreement here concerning exactly what the similarity is intended to be. But in all of the translations words such as "like" and "as" are used. The original Hebrew as well as these different translations all use similes.

Metaphors are different, because the writer does not make it explicit that figurative language is being used. Instead, something is stated as though it is a fact, and the reader must recognize that figurative language is being used. So in Psalm 18.35, the text says "You have given me the shield

of your salvation." In this case God's salvation is compared to a shield, which protects a person from danger, but there is no word such as "like" or "as" to make explicit the fact that this is a comparison. This is therefore a metaphor.

Although both metaphors and similes use figurative language, the effect of using these two types can be quite different from each other. With similes, one knows immediately that figurative language is being used. But in the case of metaphor, the text simply makes a statement about a thing which can be quite unexpected or startling. The psalmist says to God, "You have given me the shield of your salvation" (Psalm 18.35), which at first sounds as though God has actually given that person a real shield. The hearer or reader has to ask such questions as, "Did God really give him a shield?" And "What is a 'shield of salvation?'" After further reflection, the person realizes that the psalmist is making a comparison, and saying that God's salvation is like a shield. But in the case of a metaphor, it is sometimes possible that the meaning is deeper than this. One can think of God's salvation as working to protect a person in just the way that a shield protects a warrior from the arrows of the enemy. In that sense, God's salvation is not just "like a shield", but in some way actually is a shield for the person who is protected by it.

This becomes especially important when we are dealing with metaphors that have great religious significance. So when Jesus says "I am the bread of life" (John 6.35) or "I am the light of the world" (John 8.12), there is no doubt that this is figurative language. But we would hesitate to change these metaphors to similes and say, "I am like the bread of life" or "I am as light to the world." When we change these statements to similes, they do not seem to convey the same deep truth that they do as metaphors, because there is a sense in which Jesus actually IS the light of the world, not just "like" the light of the world.

It is not difficult to tell similes from metaphors. Here are some examples of figurative language. Students should be able to identify which is which. (Note: If you are working through this on your own, you can use a piece of paper to shield the answers which are on the line **below** each example. Move the paper down to the dotted line and decide for yourself before looking at the answer. The verses are taken from various English translations – NIV, NRSV, REB, TEV.)

Psa 5.9	Their throats are open graves	
-----		metaphor
Psa 17.5	My steps have held fast to your paths my feet have not slipped.	
-----		metaphor
Psa 22.14	I am poured out like water	
-----		simile
Psa 23.1	The Lord is my shepherd	
-----		metaphor
Psa 32.9	Do not be stupid like a horse or a mule, which must be controlled with a bit and bridle to make it submit.	
-----		simile
Psa 37.6	He will make your righteousness shine clear as the day, and the justice of your cause like the brightness of noon.	
-----		simile
Psa 42.1	As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.	

Psa 48.10	God, your right hand is filled with victory.	simile

Psa 52.2	You plan destruction; your slanderous tongue is as sharp as a razor.	metaphor

Psa 57.1	God, in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge.	simile

Psa 58.7	Let them vanish like water that runs away.	metaphor

Psa 83.13	O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind.	simile

Psa 98.8	Let the rivers clap their hands; let the mountains sing together for joy.	simile

Psa 116.16	O Lord, you have loosed my bonds.	metaphor

Isa 1.15	No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood.	metaphor

Isa 45.8	Let the skies rain down righteousness.	metaphor

Jer 5.14	I will make my words in your mouth a fire, and these people the wood it consumes.	metaphor

Amos 3.12	As a shepherd rescues from the mouth of the lion two legs or a piece of an ear, so shall the people of Israel be rescued.	metaphor

Amos 5.2	Fallen, no more to rise, is maiden Israel; forsaken on her land, with no one to raise her up.	simile

Amos 5.24	Let justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like an river that never goes dry.	metaphor

		simile

14.4.1 Metaphors

Although the comparison is only implicit in metaphors, in other ways they are like similes. The figurative language in metaphors can still be analyzed in the same way, using the terms *object*, *comparison*, and *similarity*.

For example, there are metaphors in Matthew 10.6 and 16.23, Psalm 22.6 and 34.8, and Isaiah 12.3. It may be good to see if one can identify the three terms of these metaphors before looking at the solutions below.

	Object	Comparison	Similarity
Mat 10.6	people of Israel	sheep	do not know their way
16.23	Peter	Satan	thoughts are not God's thoughts
Psa 22.6	I	worm	scorned, despised
34.8	the Lord	(food)	enjoyable to experience
Isa 12.3	you experiencing God's salvation	someone drawing water from a well (probably implied: someone very thirsty)	an experience of joy

Here are some more examples of metaphors (from the NRSV except where noted):

Psa 18.28	It is you who light my lamp; the Lord, my God, lights up my darkness.
19.9-10	the laws of the Lord are sweeter than honey
30.11	You have turned my mourning into dancing you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy
Pro 4.25-27	Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Keep straight the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left, turn your foot away from evil.
Isa 1.5-6	[rebellious Israel is a wounded person]
1.22	your choice wine is diluted with water (NIV)
27.6	in days to come Jacob shall take root, Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit
33.11	you conceive chaff, you give birth to straw (NIV)
Jer 4.28	Because of this the earth shall mourn, and the heavens above grow black.
Amos 4.1	hear this word, you cows of Bashan

The translation of metaphors is much like similes. The main difference is that in some cases translators feel that it is better to change a metaphor to a simile in order to make EXPLICIT that it is a comparison. In some cases, if you do not do this, your readers may misunderstand a metaphor and believe it is supposed to be understood literally. If you have to do this, remember that it is usually just a matter of making explicit something that is implicit.

For example, NRSV in Isaiah 1.21a, 22, describing Jerusalem, has
How the faithful city has become a whore!

...
Your silver has become dross,
your wine is mixed with water.

TEV translates this with, "The city that was once faithful is behaving like a whore! ... Jerusalem, you were once like silver, but now you are worthless; you were once like good wine, but now you

are only water." In order to make the ideas easier, all of the metaphors in the original have been changed into similes in the TEV. Since the first one says clearly that it is referring to a city, it is unlikely that anyone would actually misunderstand that it has literally become a whore. However, the two metaphors about silver and wine could easily be misunderstood as literal statements. That is, some readers might think that enemies have actually added water to the wine, which is not what the passage means. TEV's translation is a model that might be followed in many languages.

However, translators do need to be careful when converting metaphors into similes. As has already been mentioned, part of the meaning of metaphors is that they sound as though they are meant to be taken literally. In some cases, it may be important for translators not to remove this aspect of the meaning. Readers may need to be forced to reflect: is this really a figure of speech, or is this in some way literal? The example from Matthew 16.23, mentioned above, may be a good example of this. Was Jesus' rebuke to Peter simply a strong figure of speech? Or was Satan somehow involved in Peter's speech at that point?

In general, it may be best to let metaphors remain metaphors. But there will be many exceptions to this general rule. In most cases where there is a real risk of misunderstanding, metaphors can be turned into similes without any serious problems. Also, the way that metaphors and similes are used no doubt varies from language to language. Probably all languages use metaphor, but translators may find that in certain aspects of their culture it is inappropriate to use metaphors.

14.4.2 Figures that are partly implicit

There is an extra complication that translators often meet when working with figures of speech. Remember that there are always three parts to every figure of speech, whether it is a metaphor or simile. Sometimes one of these parts may be left implicit, most often the similarity. In the first two examples below, the implicit similarity has been put in square brackets. In the following examples, it will be a good exercise to work out what has been left implicit. However, it will often be necessary to check the larger context to see what exactly is being referred to. Again, the examples are from the NRSV unless otherwise indicated.

	Object	Comparison	Similarity
Mat 17.20	your faith	mustard seed	[small]
18.17	the sinning brother who won't repent	a pagan or tax collector	[as someone who is in no way a member of your group]

Gen 45.8 "he has made me a father to Pharaoh"
(REB says "he has made me Pharaoh's chief counselor")

Jos 7.5 "the hearts of the people melted and turned to water"
(TEV says "lost their courage")

Psa 5.9 "Their throats are open graves"

Psa 64.3 "They sharpen their tongues like swords (TEV)
and aim cruel words like arrows."

Isa 1.8 Hebrew leaves the similarity implicit.
TEV adds "as defenseless as"

Isa 1.9 Hebrew only says that they would become like Sodom and Gomorrah
TEV adds "totally destroyed", just as Sodom and Gomorrah were.

Isa 1.15-16 "No matter how much you pray, I will not listen, for your hands are covered with blood." (TEV)

Mat 7.4 "How dare you say to your brother, 'Please let me take that speck out your eye,' when you have a log in your own eye?" (TEV)

Mat 7.15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves."

Psalm 18.33 is an interesting example of the problems that translators can have when the similarity is left implicit. The Hebrew (see NRSV) says that God has made my feet like the feet of a deer. Obviously this should not be understood literally, so that if you look at my feet you will think you are seeing a deer's feet. But in what way does Hebrew mean to imply that my feet are like the feet of a deer? REB understands the similarity to be "speed", and makes this explicit by saying, "God ... makes me swift as a hind". (CEV has the same interpretation.) TEV, however, understands the similarity to be "the ability to walk in difficult places without slipping" and translates, "God ... makes me sure-footed as a deer." One reason for TEV's interpretation is that it makes this line more parallel to the second line in the verse.

In cases where it is not easy to decide what is intended, translators will need to refer to the UBS Handbooks or to other commentaries, or perhaps they can simply follow the decisions made by major language translations in their area.

14.5 The process of handling figures of speech

The various points that we have discussed can be put together as a set of procedures that translators should follow when they need to translate figurative language.

1) Be sure you understand the figurative language as well as possible in whatever language is being used as the source. What is the object, what the comparison, and what the similarity of this figurative language?

2) If any part is implicit, try to work out what is implied.

Many will be clear and easy:

Psa 58.7 Let the wicked "vanish like water that runs away"

But others will take a bit of thought or study:

Psa 64.3 They sharpen their tongues like swords

3) Once understood, if this figure is translated literally into your language, will it have the right meaning?

a) Will the main point be understood correctly?

b) In your language, does the similarity fit the comparison?

c) Is the comparison generally less difficult to understand than the object?

For example, in Psalm 58.8 are people familiar with the idea of a slug or snail "dissolving into slime"? If people do not know slugs or snails, this will be a difficult comparison. Or, if people know them but do not think of them as regularly dissolving into slime, this comparison will be very confusing.

d) Is there anything about the comparison that makes it inappropriate to use?

Isa 1.22 "your wine is mixed with water"

In some cultures, it would be hard for wine to represent something good; in other cultures, wine may always be mixed with water.

4) If for any reason a literal translation is not good, then try to replace it with a different comparison that will make the same point.

For example "white as snow" might become "white as milk"

- a) Is anything lost from the meaning if this is done?
- b) Does the new comparison sound wrong in any way? For example, is milk really thought of as pure white?
- c) Does the new comparison clash in any way with the Bible culture?
For example, would it be possible to say in Ezekiel 1.24, that
"the sound of their wings was like the roar of a helicopter"?
In India, there is an expression for people crying a lot which says, "the Ganges and Jumna poured from their eyes". Would it be appropriate to use this in Ruth 1.9? (The Ganges and Jumna are great rivers of the region; but perhaps only people from the culture can really answer this question.)
- d) Does the new comparison imply a practice or custom specifically related to a different religion?

Questions like these must be asked, but they should not frighten a translator. It is often possible to find a new comparison that will work very well.

- 5) If it does not seem possible to use a new comparison, drop the figurative language and simply give the meaning literally.

For example, NRSV in Psalm 17.14 has (referring to my wicked enemies, see verse 9), "May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them." TEV has put the idea more literally: "Punish them with the sufferings you have stored up for them."

- 6) When changing figurative language to literal language, it is important to keep one point in mind. Figurative language that is used repeatedly in the Bible or which is especially stressed in some Bible passages should usually not be changed. Instead, because of its importance in the Bible, a translator should try very hard to find a way to use figurative language in those passages. This would include the image of the vine and the branches in John 15.1-7, the idea of God as a shepherd and his people as his sheep, and probably the comparison of God's punishment as someone being made to drink a strong drink.

Although it may require a translator's best ideas to find a way to translate such ideas using figurative language, the fact that many of these images are used in a number of different passages will at least be a help to the translator. Because each time they are found, they will reinforce each other and help the reader to recognize them and know what is intended.

14.6 Important Old Testament figures

Some comparisons are used frequently in the figurative language of the Old Testament. It is good for translators working on the Old Testament to be aware of them and to learn to recognize them. It may be helpful to briefly list some of these here, with some of the passages where they are used.

- 1) People's enemies hunt them like
 - a) a man hunts wild animals, using traps and nets, bows and arrows
(Psa 7.15, 9.15, 10.9b, 11.2, 35.7-8, 38.12, 57.6)
 - b) a wild animal hunts a person
(Psa 7.2, 10.8-9a, 17.11-12, 22.12-13, 22.16)
- 2) The Lord protects people in trouble
 - a) like a shield, rock, or fortress -- where they can be safe from their enemies
(Psa 18.2, 28.7-8, 31.1-3, 62.1-2)
 - b) sometimes like a baby bird is protected by its mother's wings
(Psa 17.8, 57.1)

- 3) The Lord's punishment is like
 - a) fire (often implies anger)
(Psa 11.6, 21.9, Isa 1.31, Amo 1.11-12)
 - b) being made to drink strong drink, so that you are drunk and don't know what you are doing (Psa 60.3, Isa 28.7, Hab 2.15-16)
 - c) harvest, such as threshing, wine-treading
(Isa 17.5-6, 63.1-6, Jer 25.30, 51.33, Hos 6.11, Joel 3.13)
God's enemies are carried away like chaff
(Job 21.18, Psa 1.4, Isa 17.13, Jer 13.24)
 - d) an attacking warrior or army
(Psa 7.12-13, 35.1-3)
- 4) God's approach is like
 - a) a storm approaching (Psa 18.7-15, 29.3-9)
 - b) an earthquake (Psa 18.7, 68.7-8, Isa 64.1-3, Ezk 38.18-20)
- 5) Israel (or towns of Israel, or Jerusalem) is a lady
(Isa 37.22, Jer 14.17, 31.4, Lam 1.15, Amo 5.2)
- 6) People's disobedience to God is like
 - a) adultery (the people are like a wife, faithless to God, her husband)
(Jer 3.6-10, 5.7-9)
 - b) prostitution (Isa 1.21, Ezk 23)
- 7) People experience fear and suffering like a woman in labor
(Psa 48.5-6, Isa 13.8, Jer 6.24, Mic 4.10)
- 8) Life is like walking along a road
 - a) God's people must follow the right path (Psa 25.4, 27.11, 56.13)
 - b) if God helps you, it is like making your road smooth, wide, and well-lighted
(Psa 18.36, 37.31, 119.105)
 - c) for the opposite idea Job 19.8, Psa 35.6, Lam 3.9
- 9) Trouble makes you feel as if you are about to die
 - a) as though caught in a trap (Psa 18.5)
 - b) as though drowning in a flood (Psa 18.4, 69.1-2, 14-15)
 - c) drowning in the sea (Psa 18.16, 42.7)
 - d) being saved is like being brought back from death/the grave/the World of the Dead
(Psa 30.3, 56.13)
- 10) Good things (God's word, etc.) are like (or better than) pure gold and silver
(Job 22.25, Psa 19.10, 119.72, Prov 3.13-14, 25.11-12, Sng 5.11)
- 11) God's blessing is like rain in a dry land
(Deu 32.2, 2 Sam 1.21, Psa 65.9-13)
- 12) Because of people's short lives, they are like grass, soon to wither away
(Job 14.1-2, 24.24, Psa 90.5-6, Isa 40.6-7)
- 13) God's reward to the righteous is like "inheriting the land" (because the evil people who have caused them so much trouble are destroyed)
(Psa 37.11, 22, 28-29, 34, 69.36, Isa 57.13, 65.9)
- 14) Being ruled by a foreign power is like being a cow used for ploughing, wearing a yoke on its shoulders. (Isa 9.4, Jer 27.8, 28.2, Lam 5.5, Ezk 34.27) [\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[Detailed TOC\]](#)

UNIT FIFTEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Where Do We Find Words We Don't Have?

15.1 Introduction: Relevance for the Translation Curriculum:

Translators and potential translators are often troubled from the very beginning of their work by the problem of words which their languages do not have. They are keenly aware of areas where they feel that their own languages are lacking vocabulary. They are also aware that many words commonly used in their languages are actually borrowings from other languages, and they may wonder whether it is all right to use such words in their translations.

This broad topic draws together a number of issues, some of which may also be treated separately in other units of this manual. That is all to the good and will just reinforce what is said here.

When many people think seriously about trying to translate material from other languages into their own language, one of the first things that they think about is the problem of words which will need to be translated but which are missing in their own language. They will ask, "What are we supposed to do when our language has no word for X?", where 'X' might be 'figs' or 'donkey' or 'ship' or 'king' or 'synagogue' or 'hope' or 'angel' or 'circumcision' or whatever many other words or concepts.

The material here is presented partly according to the different types of problems that people may encounter and partly according to various approaches that will be useful in finding solutions to these problems. The topics covered include such things as how to handle names of persons and places which are not known in the local culture, how to deal with objects and other concepts which a language does not have a word for, and how a translator should deal with the issue of borrowing words from other languages.

Where do we look when a language doesn't have a word for something? If a translator finds that a concept is lacking in his language, there is often a temptation to use a word from the language he is translating from. Later on in this unit, we will look in more detail at the issue of borrowing words from other languages. However, it is important to state right at the beginning the general principle that translators should follow. The general rule is this:

We should not look to other languages to supply words that seem to be lacking in our language. Instead, we should try to use the resources of our own language to find a way to translate the concept.

The basic reason for this rule is that as translators, we are trying to give our readers the same understanding and reaction to the text that the original readers had. If the writer in the original language was using words in the normal way, without including words that the reader would not understand, then we should not introduce this type of word into our text. Our goal, then, is to find a way to express the meaning of the message with words which our readers are already familiar with. We will try to avoid using words from other languages which will be difficult for our readers, and which will probably either be meaningless or open to misunderstanding.

It is true that it is sometimes difficult to find ways to follow this principle faithfully. However, it should always be the goal that we are aiming at. In the following sections, we will look at some of the issues that translators face as they try to deal with difficult concepts.

15.2 Using a descriptive phrase for a single concept

The discussion so far has talked about the problem of translating difficult words. However, we have also described the problem in terms of "concepts that a language does not have a word for."

Although these are two ways of describing the same problem, there is a significant advantage in focusing on the concepts rather than the words. It may be true that these concepts are expressed by single words in other languages, but that does not mean that this is the only way to express them.

In fact, it is often impossible to find a single word which will be a good translation for a word that our language does not have. **Single words in one language may have to be translated by phrases (groups of words) in another language.** For example the word *emerald* (Rev. 21:19) in English might be translated into another language as the phrase "a valuable green stone".

This focus on "concepts" rather than "individual words" is helpful not only in the translator's target language, but also in the language of the source texts. The translation principles we will be discussing will work just as well whether the item we are trying to translate is itself a single word (like *breastplate*, as in 1 Kings 22:34)) or a phrase (like *the Passover Festival*, as in Luke 2:41).

When translators come across an expression that cannot easily be translated into their own languages, their first job is to make sure that they understand clearly what this expression means. This involves at least two steps:

- 1) Find out what this expression meant in the culture of the Bible.
- 2) Work out what aspect of this concept was mainly in focus when it was used in the passage being translated.

Once translators understand why something has been mentioned in the Bible text, they should try to find a phrase in their own language which gives just enough information to give the necessary meaning.

For example, a particular culture may not know the custom of throwing stones at people in order to kill them. In the Bible there is one word for this, translated in English as "to stone" (the word in Hebrew is *ragam* and in Greek *lithazo*). But once translators understand that this is a kind of execution for people who have done something that deserves the death penalty, they should have no trouble finding an expression in their language which will give the meaning clearly. However, it is likely that this expression will require more than one word in the language of the translation, such as "to execute by throwing stones at someone (until they are dead)".

Translators need to keep at least four important points in mind when trying to find a way to translate an expression for which their culture has no obvious term:

a) Our main goal as translators is to make the original message of the Bible writer clear to our people. So the thing to focus on is what the Bible writer was trying to say. There are many things that we can say about snow, including the fact that it is cold and the fact that it is white. If in a particular passage (such as Matthew 28:3 or Revelation 1:14), the Bible writer was interested only in the color and brightness of snow, then there is no need for us to find an expression that tells our readers anything about snow being cold. In fact, snow does not need to be mentioned at all. The point in these passages is that the clothes or hair is dazzling white.

b) The Bible is not an encyclopedia, and we should not make it sound as though it is. We need to translate in such a way that unknown items are mentioned naturally, not in a way that makes it sound as though these things were just as strange to the original readers of the Bible as they may be to us. In the great majority of cases, the original writer was talking about something that was well known in the Bible culture. If we think only in terms of our readers and say something like "the people of Israel used to wear small boxes containing scripture texts tied around their foreheads", this is unacceptable, because we are no longer translating the thought of the Bible. That kind of wording is clearly aimed at people who have never heard of this cultural item, known as a "phylactery" (see Matthew 23:5). If we use this type of expression, we have shifted to a modern time setting and we are writing as though we are preparing the text for a Bible

dictionary. If this type of expression is really needed, it must be used in a footnote or word list, not in the text.

If we need an expression to translate "phylacteries", we should look for an expression that will help our readers to understand what they are, but which could also have been used by the original writer. Perhaps we could use an expression like "scripture packets" or "text boxes". By itself, this will probably not be clear enough to give our readers all the information they need. However, we can add the extra information in a footnote, an entry in the glossary or word list, an illustration, or in any combination of these options.

c) If an unknown item is mentioned more than once in the Bible, then it is good to see if we can find a phrase which can be used each time we need to translate it. However, it is important to remember that the meaning and purpose of the item may be quite different in different passages. It is more important to make sure that the meaning and purpose are clear in each passage than it is to always use exactly the same words to translate the original expression.

Example: "Scarlet"

There is a kind of red cloth mentioned occasionally in the Bible, which is usually translated by the English word "scarlet". In Greek the word (*kokkinos*) can refer both to the cloth and to the bright red color of the cloth. In the NRSV, the English word "scarlet" occurs once in the Old Testament and six times in the New Testament. Let us say that we are trying to translate this concept into a language that does not have a single word with exactly the right meaning.

In Isaiah 1.18 we find the famous passage, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow." Here, the contrast is clearly between the bright red color known as "scarlet" and the color white. The fact that there may be a cloth called "scarlet" is not important at all. The translator should therefore focus on the strong red color, although there is nothing wrong with mentioning "a cloth that is bright red".

In Matthew 27.28, we are told that the soldiers who were mocking Jesus at the time of his trial put a scarlet robe on him. The significance of this is that scarlet was a very expensive cloth which was often worn by kings. The color itself is not so important in this passage as the cultural significance of the color. Again, there is no problem if the translator wants to mention the cloth or the color, but in order to bring out the main point, they should focus on the connection with kings. It would not be wrong to translate this passage as "they put a royal robe on Jesus", although it could be made more detailed, "they put a red robe on Jesus of the sort that kings wear". Certainly there is no reason why a translator needs to find a single word that will convey just this meaning!

Finally, in Revelation 18 "scarlet" occurs in a list of expensive merchandise, along with other kinds of luxurious cloth, such as "fine linen", "purple", and "silk". In a context like this the translator needs to emphasize that it is a kind of cloth, if possible making clear that it is an expensive kind of cloth. The fact that it is red is not in focus here, although that can be included if it is not too difficult to do.

d) Remember that we can always use pictures, footnotes, and a glossary or word list if we need to give our readers more help than we can give them in the Bible text. It is not necessary to try to include all the meaning we would like to give in the text itself.

To summarize, then, there are concepts expressed as a single word in the source language that may need to be expressed as a phrase in the language of the translation. The source language has taken a set of components of meaning and bundled them into a single word. Often our language

will not have any word that carries just the right meaning. But by using more than one word, we can present the same components of meaning to our own readers.

There is one final practical point to keep in mind when using phrases to translate key concepts. If Bible readers need to recognize and learn to use the concept in question, then translators should try to make the phrase as concise as possible. People sometimes object to long phrases as a way of referring to important technical terms.

Translators may nevertheless sometimes feel that the only way to give a clear understanding is to use a fairly long phrase. In that case, it may be possible to use the full, longer phrase in certain key places, but to have a shortened version available for contexts where it is clear that this refers to the longer, more complete expression. For example, in some translations, the full term for "Messiah" is something like "the king that God promised to send to save his people". There can also be a shorter version of this, "the promised king".

15.3 Classifying terms by categories (generic terms)

Every language tends to divide the things in its world into categories, such as "animals", "buildings", "tools", "occupations", "clothing", "food", and so on. Many times these large categories are divided into smaller categories, so that "animals" might be divided into "dangerous animals", "birds", "snakes", "fish" and so on. When this happens, we say that the more general words, which describe large groups of things, are *generic*. The particular items included under these generic words are *specific*.

"Tool" is *generic*. "Hammer", "pliers", and "screwdriver" are *specific* examples of "tool". "Bird" is *generic*. "Eagle", "pigeon", and "hornbill" are *specific* examples of "bird".

The Jordan is a specific example of the more generic word "river". When we look at how to translate names later in this unit, it will be suggested that rather than just using a name like "Jordan", which many readers may not be familiar with, it is helpful for the readers if we include the generic word "river", so that the readers know immediately what this strange "Jordan" is.

When translators meet something in the Bible which their own cultures do not have, translators should ask themselves this question: "If our people saw this thing and knew what it does or how it is used, what would they think it is? Which generic group in our language would it fit into?"

If we can agree on what type of thing this new thing is, we can use the generic term for it as an important way to help our readers relate to this new thing. The generic word can be at least part of our translation, but we can perhaps add more information to make clear what specific type of thing it is.

There are several ways that this can be done. We have already mentioned two of them in passing, but they are included here again, in order to make this list as complete as possible.

1) We can use the generic word along with the name:

"the river Jordan" (for example, in Mark 3.8)

"the bird ostrich" (as in Micah 1.8)

"a religious sect called the Pharisees" (as in Matthew 9.11)

2) We can use the generic word, the name, and a description:

"a valuable green stone called emerald"

(The generic expression here is "valuable stone", the name is "emerald", and the description is "green"; but if there is no such generic category in our language as "valuable stone", then "stone" is the generic word and both "valuable" and "green" are descriptions.)

3) We can use the generic word and a description (omitting the name):

“phylactery”: could be translated as “a box containing scripture verses”

[Note, however, that with each of these options, a) – c), we should try if possible to find a rendering which the original author might have used, so as to preserve the integrity of the text itself. See 2.0 b) above.]

4) We can use the generic word by itself.

This final option may seem surprising. It may seem at first that if we use only the generic term, we would produce a translation with an incomplete meaning, which would be a strange thing to recommend to a translator. But if we look more deeply at the way languages are used, we will see that in fact this option is used regularly in translation. For example, the word that we use for "house" in our language may have originally meant the kind of house that we build in our own culture. However, when people from our culture saw (or see) the kinds of houses that other people build, we usually feel that even though they are different from our kind of house, it is still correct to call them by our word for "house". When we use our word for "house" in this way, the original meaning of "house" in our language expands a bit for us, and now it includes new types of houses that we did not know about before.

Another example: In most parts of Papua New Guinea, the hair on people's heads is short. It would be very difficult for a woman to do what Mary did in John 11.2, to wipe Jesus' feet with her hair. Yet few people will have any objections to using their usual word for "head hair" to describe what Mary had on her head (even if we need to put a footnote in to remind our people that she had very long hair!)

In many Papua New Guinea cultures, the only type of grain that people know is rice (this was not known traditionally, but it has become very popular in recent years). Papua New Guinea languages now have a word for rice, even if it is a word that was originally borrowed from another language. If these people later discover other kinds of grain, such as wheat or barley, they may immediately agree that these are new kinds of "rice". The word that we thought was a specific word meaning only "rice" quickly expands to include other types of grain. In this case, the word "rice" now has two meanings. In its new meaning it is a generic word meaning "grain". At the same time, it can also be used for the best-known specific kind of grain, which is "rice".

This is exactly what has happened with the word "pig" in many languages of New Guinea. Originally the word for "pig" in these languages referred only to one specific animal, the "pig". But when people began to meet other kinds of animals they had never seen before, such as sheep, cows, and horses, they often decided that even though these looked different, they were obviously just a new type of "pig". Their word for "pig" took on a new, generic meaning. When the word is used in this sense, it is actually quite misleading to translate it into English as "pig", since in English "pig" has only a specific meaning, not a generic one. In the generic sense "pig" in these languages means something like "large mammal" or "domesticated mammal", depending on the particular language.

It is true that the two examples just given would need to be handled with great care in an actual Bible translation. Rice itself was not known during Bible times, so it is important to make sure that the translation does not suggest ordinary rice, but clearly implies other kinds of grain. For example, it may be necessary to use a name along with the generic term and call it "rice wheat" or "rice barley". In the case of mammals, it is perhaps even more important that we should make clear that the animals mentioned in the Bible are not the specific kind of pig. Pigs were considered unclean by the people of Israel, and they did not look after them. Pigs certainly could not be used as sacrificial animals. Again, in many cases it may be necessary to use both the generic term and the specific term, "pig cow", "pig sheep", and so on.

This process of the expansion of meaning is a very important one for translators to remember. Sometimes translators are troubled because they say that their language does not have a word for something. But in fact, if their people saw this thing, they might all quickly agree that it is just an unusual type of something that the language does have a word for. There is no need for the translator to develop a special term. The word already in use in the language is generic enough to cover this new thing.

An example might be the word "lamp". If we look at the type of lamps used in ancient Israel and compare them with the type of lamps used in another culture today, the lamps may look very different and work on somewhat different principles. However, they both serve the same purpose of providing light in the darkness. It is very likely that everyone will agree that the word we use for "lamp" in our culture today can be extended to include the kind of lamp used in ancient Israel. This is of course a good place to include an illustration, to help people know more precisely what kind of lamp was used in those days. But we do not need to feel that we have misled people by using only the word "lamp" to translate the original Bible term.

In fact, a language might have a word that originally meant a light made by joining pieces of cane together and lighting them (in English this would be called a "torch"). Even though this looks very specific, it should not surprise us if the meaning of that word is extended in the language to become a generic word meaning "something which we use for light". This general term might include various specific items that were not originally known in the culture at all, such as "hurricane lamp", "flashlight", "car headlights", and "electric light". To distinguish these different terms, there may of course be different specific words that can be used along with the generic word, to show which particular kind of light one has in mind.

15.4 Working with meaning-sets (domains)

Up until now we have been talking as though we can find a translation for each word as we come across it in our translation work. Many times this will be possible and it will work well. However, there are sets of words that are related to each other in meaning. The only way to find a good translation for these words is to study them together as a group. We must first work out how the concepts are related to each other, how they are the same and how they are different. Only after we have a clear understanding of how the whole group of concepts relates to each other can we find good translations.

Here are some examples of such meaning-sets (also known as *semantic domains*):

a) The various kinds of religious leaders mentioned in the Bible: priest (along with High Priest and chief priest), prophet, apostle, disciple, evangelist, preacher, teacher, Pharisee, Sadducee, scribe, and so on. If we work on only one word at a time, we might think we have found a good translation for (say) "prophet", but later find that our translation is really more appropriate as a translation for "preacher", and that we need a different word for "prophet".

b) The various kinds of spirit beings: angel, demon, devil, Satan, evil spirit, spirit, God, false god, Holy Spirit. One might want to think about a word for heaven at the same time.

c) Religious buildings: God's Temple, temples of various false gods, tabernacle (the sacred tent of the people of Israel when they were in the wilderness), synagogue, church, and so on.

d) The various Festivals of the Jews, such as Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles.

In many languages there may be good ways to translate some of these terms. Not all of them will be problems. However, almost certainly some of them will be. The point is that rather than dealing separately with each of the problem words as you come to them, it is better to handle the

whole set together, to be sure that the best terms are chosen that rightly match the correct meanings of the original words.

This approach is important not only for religious terms, but for any kind of meaning-set or semantic domain. For example, one might want to consider translations for all of the words related to water, such as sea, lake, pond, river, canal, ditch, trench, spring, well, pool, and cistern. One important point to note is that it is not necessary to have different words in our own languages for every word in Greek or English. In fact, English makes a distinction between "river", "stream", and "creek" which is different from distinctions made in Greek. The Greek word "potamos" (as in Acts 16.13 and John 7.38) is ordinarily used for all of these words. On the other hand, Greek has a word "cheimarros" (as in John 18.1) which refers to streams which flow only at certain times of the year and are dry the rest of the year. English does not exactly have a word with this meaning, although in different parts of the world where such a word is needed, English has sometimes borrowed words from other languages, such as "arroyo" or "wadi". Greek also has words such as "pelagos" (used in Matthew 18.6 and Acts 27.5) which refer to the parts of the sea that are far away from land. English again does not have any word that exactly matches this.

Another type of meaning-set are words dealing with important parts of Bible culture which are unknown in our culture. An example might be all of the activities connected with wheat: planting, harvesting, making bread, and so on. The same could be true of words connected with the growing of grapes and the making of wine.

The actual procedures for doing this type of analysis are dealt with in the unit on semantic domains (see [section 5.3](#)).

15.5 Making use of a cultural equivalent

Sometimes we will find that even though our own culture does not know the item mentioned in the Bible, we do have something that we use for very much the same purpose. This needs to be carefully thought about, but it is sometimes possible to use our own item in the translation, even though it is not strictly the same as the thing mentioned in the Bible.

An example is the word "book". In fact, books mentioned in the Bible were all scrolls. The kind of book that we know today (sewn at the spine, where a person can turn the pages) was only developed later. In form there is a significant difference between a scroll and a book. Yet for most purposes, the functions of the two items are the same. For this reason, few people are troubled when we use the word "book" to refer to the scrolls known in the Bible culture. For example, John 21.25 says that if everything Jesus did were written down, there would not be room in the whole world for the books that would have to be written. John was thinking of hand-written scrolls when he wrote this statement; when most modern readers read the statement, they think of the printed and bound books of today. Yet in this context, the functions of the ancient scroll and the modern book are exactly the same: the natural place where Jesus' deeds might be recorded.

There is one type of situation where it is often especially valid to use a cultural substitute when translating. This is when the thing mentioned in the Bible is not being referred to literally (for example, in a reference to a historical event that actually took place), but is just part of figurative language or other kinds of comparison. For example, if the Bible refers to a lion only in order to make the reader think of something which is very dangerous (as in 2 Timothy 4.17), then we might be able to substitute something that our own people know which is very dangerous, such as a crocodile. However, the translation of figurative language has its own principles, and they are discussed in a separate unit.

One important thing to keep in mind when making culture substitutions is the reactions of our own people. If the thing we want to substitute is something that everyone knows is NOT part of

the Bible culture, then it should probably not be used in the Bible translation. People will feel that this item is out of place in the Bible, and therefore they will feel that our translation of this passage is wrong. This kind of substitution is called an “anachronism” – which literally means something which is out of its correct time period but by extension also refers to something which is out of its true geographical or cultural location as well. For example, translators in Australia and New Guinea might have good expressions using kangaroos and wallabies, and they might want to use these expressions in the Bible. But when people from these languages learn that there were none of these creatures in the Bible lands, they may not be happy that they have been introduced into the Bible.

15.6 Borrowing words from other languages

In spite of the many excellent options that we have discussed for finding expressions that are needed in a translation, the fact is that translators still do sometimes find it very difficult to say some things clearly in their own languages. In cases like this, they may be tempted to use a word from another language. If we are writing (or speaking) one language, and we use a word from another language, this is known as *borrowing*. We say that the word taken from another language is a borrowed word.

The issue of borrowing sometimes causes a great deal of confusion for translators, so it is important to make sure that we understand the principles involved here.

15.6.1 Cases where a word has already been borrowed into a language

All languages borrow words from other languages. This is almost always true when two languages are in close contact. That is, if there are a number of people who speak two different languages and who communicate a lot with each other, words from each language will begin to be used when these people speak the other language. There are very good reasons for this. It is usually the case that there are certain words in any given language which have quite specific meanings, meanings which are not closely matched by words from another language. So if a person is speaking to another person or persons, and he wants to refer to such a concept, it will be natural to use the word which fits that concept, even if he is speaking the other language. This will be especially true if the person he is speaking to knows both languages as well as he does. All of the people speaking together know the meaning of the word, so it is not a difficult or unusual word to them. However, from the point of view of the language they are speaking, the word is a foreign word. If such a word begins to be used regularly by the speakers of this language, we say that the language has borrowed that word.

An example of this is the English word “corruption”. This word has a very specific meaning referring to people in positions of power (in government or business) taking advantage of their position for their own benefit. Some languages may not have a word with just this area of meaning. The concept could of course be expressed in the language as a phrase. But if two people speaking that language both know the English word, they will often not feel any need to find a longer expression in their own language for a concept that they can express precisely by using the English word “corruption”.

This sort of thing happens frequently in cases where there is a well-known trade language that is used in an area where there are many other local languages. Words from the trade language will begin to become part of these local languages. In this way, English words have been borrowed by many local languages in countries like India, Myanmar, the Philippines, Kenya, Zambia, Nigeria, and in the indigenous languages of Canada. Spanish words are common in the local languages of Latin America, and French words are common in many languages of West Africa.

However, the borrowing is by no means all in one direction. In countries where English is widely used, the local variety of English always includes a certain number of words related to the particular culture of that country, which have been borrowed from one of the languages of the country. For example, in Papua New Guinea English one frequently hears words like *bilas*

'decoration', *bilum* 'shoulder bag', and *wantok* 'friend'. In India and Myanmar people speaking English regularly refer to large numbers as so many *lakh* 'one hundred thousand'. Indian English also includes words like *dhobi* 'the person who does the laundry' and *chowkidar* 'watchman'. Filipino English includes the word *barangay* 'ward, in a city' and *palai* 'unhusked rice'.

Borrowed words of the kind we have been discussing originally came from other languages, but they are now completely integrated into the language which has borrowed them. They are usually pronounced according to the sound pattern of the borrowing language, and they have developed specific meanings in the borrowing language. These meanings are often somewhat different from the meaning in the original language.

When translators say that their language does not have words for certain concepts, they often mean that there are no purely native words for those concepts. If you ask people from those languages how they express those ideas, they will say that they use the type of borrowed word that we have been discussing. The translators are worried that it will be wrong to use these words that originally came from other languages. But in most cases there is no reason to avoid these words. It is true that they originally came from other languages, but the language has now borrowed them, and they are fully a part of the language of the translation. English itself has probably borrowed more words from more languages than any other language has.

In other words, it is usually all right to use words in our translations that are fully a part of the modern language, as people speak it today, even though these were originally borrowed from other languages. It is of course important to write the word as it is pronounced in the borrowing language, not according to the way it was written in the original language. And we should use the words according to the meanings they have in the borrowing language.

15. 6.2 Cases where a word is unknown in a language

Notice that in the examples just discussed, it is the speakers of the language who have somehow agreed to borrow the word in question. This has made the word fully a part of the language, so there is of course no problem if we use the word in our translations.

It is quite a different thing if no one in the language knows a particular word from another language, and it is the Bible translator who wants to borrow this word and use it in the translation. For example, a translator may feel that the language has no good word for "church" and try to use the Greek *ekklesia*. Or a translator may want to borrow the English word *temple* or *prophet*. Or a translator may feel that a *phylactery* is such a specifically Jewish concept that the Greek or English should be used. But these words are not a part of the language, no one knows them, and this type of borrowing should NOT be done. There are at least three reasons for this.

1) One of the rules for translators is that they should be faithful to their own languages, using their language in a way that everyone can understand. If translators begin to bring in new words, they are beginning to create their own new form of the language, rather than being faithful to the language as people use it.

2) When words are really borrowed into a language, they often take on meanings that are different from what they meant in the original language. Translators in many languages have tried to introduce words which they thought would be helpful in their language, only to find that when people actually do start using these words, they use them with a meaning different from what the translator expected or intended.

Some early translators in India felt that the languages they were translating into had no word meaning "wine". These cultures had a kind of rice beer, but no alcoholic drink made from fruit, which is what wine technically is. Therefore, they borrowed the word "wine" from English to describe the common drink of Jesus' time. Since then, some of these languages have borrowed the word "wine" to mean any kind of foreign alcoholic drink, including whiskey and brandy. This

means that the Bible translations that use the borrowed word "wine" now imply to many readers that Jesus was drinking these very strong drinks, which in fact he was not drinking. The problem is caused because translators wanted to use an English word in their translation, but later when that word was really borrowed into the language it took on meanings that are inappropriate for the translation.

3) Many times borrowed words simply remain meaningless, confusing readers. One of the early English Bibles (Douai) borrowed many words from Latin. But even though this Bible was in regular use for hundreds of years, many of those words have never become understandable in English. Examples are "iniquation", "potestates", and "longanimity". Even in context, it is often impossible to guess what the word might have meant (unless you already know Latin!):

"Purge the old leaven that you may be a new paste, as you are azymes." (1 Cor 5.7)

"He exinanited himself." (Php 2.7)

15.6.3 Some exceptions: cases where borrowing can be acceptable

In a few cases there are words that are almost like names. In cases like this it may be possible for translators to think about using the foreign word, as long as they also use a more generic descriptive word with this name, to make clear what sort of word this is.

For example, in Revelation 21.19-21, we are told that the foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem are built with twelve different kinds of precious stones. In many languages it is hard to find a name for even one kind of precious stone. Other languages may have a few, but certainly not twelve. In such languages, it will be a real challenge to the translator to find words to describe these stones.

Translators have sometimes tried to describe these stones by their color: "a valuable yellow stone" and so on. But there are two problems with this approach. First, we do not always know what color a particular kind of stone had, and some of them can have different colors. Second, in many languages it is hard to find twelve different words that might describe the color of a stone. So if we use colors, several of the stones will have to have exactly the same description. In a case like this, many translators feel that there is no choice but to treat the terms for these stones as though they are names. The translation will be something like, "The foundations were made of twelve different kinds of valuable stone, the first called jasper, the second called sapphire, the third..." Of course the spelling of these stone-names will have to be treated according to the spelling rules that have already been developed for the language.

In this example, there is a sense in which the translator is borrowing new words into the language. However, the translator has been careful to make clear exactly what the words refer to ("kinds of valuable stone"). And the words are not being treated as words with particular meanings. They are being treated simply as names, which may not be expected to have a significant meaning. The reader will presumably think, "I do not know much about valuable stones, but if I wanted to learn about how to recognize them, then no doubt I could learn how to use these names correctly."

This same approach may often be needed for animals and birds that are not known in a particular area, such as lions. In a case like this, the translators will need to decide what kind of animal this would be according to the language's own classification system. For example, in some languages of Papua New Guinea, all large mammals are referred to as types of "pig". But in other languages, "pig" can only be used to refer to animals that are looked after and eaten by people, not to wild and dangerous animals. The translator needs to find the right classification for the language of the translation.

Sometimes translators like to add other descriptions as well, to help the readers know more exactly what sort of animal this is. If this is done carefully, this can be all right. But always remember that we are trying to be faithful to the message of the original writer. We do not want to

give our readers the impression that the original writer was describing an animal that his own people did not know!

15.6.4 A possible problem: concern for language purity

There are certain approaches to borrowing which are not directly related to translation, but which can cause complications for the translation program. For example, we sometimes find translators who are concerned about the purity of their own languages. Especially if the translators are somewhat older, they may remember their language as it was spoken before many words were borrowed from other languages. They may object to this influx of foreign words, and they may feel that the Bible translation is an excellent place to "hold the line" against this degradation of the language, so that only a pure form of the language will be allowed in the translation.

This concern for purity may be more valid in some languages than in others. However, one important point must be kept in mind. That is that our primary goal in Bible translation is to convey the meaning of the Scriptures accurately for today's readers. If "purity of language" requires using archaic words that are no longer understood by the majority of people today, then the goal of maintaining purity comes into conflict with the goal of accuracy and understandability. From the point of view of the Bible Societies, it is the concern for purity that needs to be sacrificed in a case like this.

15.6.5 Another possible problem: concern for prestige

The concern for "purity of language" may lead people to resist using borrowed words even when they should be used. But there is another motivation for borrowing that can lead translators in the opposite direction. This is the feeling that words from other languages have more prestige than ordinary words from our own language. This concern for prestige can take different forms. Sometimes it is a feeling that it is more respectful to refer to the Holy Spirit with the English words "Holy Spirit" than by ordinary words from our own language. At other times people may feel that if they use words from foreign languages it will impress others with their ability to use language, or with their level of knowledge.

These concerns for prestige are just as wrong for translators as concerns for purity. Although they are pulling translators in opposite directions, both of these motivations will cause the language used in the translation to be different from the real language in use among the majority of people. Instead of trying to promote their own views of what their language should be like, translators should try to become students of language usage among their own people. Translators should always be listening to the way people actually use the language, to make sure that they are using words in the way that most people use them.

15.6.6 The question of religious expressions from non-Christian sources

There is another, perhaps more justifiable motivation that sometimes leads translators to consider borrowing words from other languages. This is found in cases where translators are hesitant to use terms from the traditional religion to express similar Christian concepts. They may feel that the terms in the language are overly contaminated by their association with the pagan belief system and the only alternative is to use borrowed words.

For example, the traditional religious practice of an area may have involved killing animals and offering them to the spirits. Is it appropriate to use the traditional term for that ritual to refer to "sacrifice" in the Old Testament? Is it appropriate to use the term for the ritual leaders who made those offerings to refer to the "priests" of the Old Testament?

Situations like this need to be examined on a case-by-case basis, and it is not possible to provide advice that will always be valid. However, two points can be made. First, this type of situation is often found in minority languages where many speakers may have a reasonable knowledge of a trade language. So terms that might be borrowed from the trade language are probably not totally unknown to most of the speakers. But second, the dangers of borrowing words will still be present

even in this situation. Translators must carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of all of their options before making a final decision.

15.6.7 When has a word really become part of a language?

There is one final point that can sometimes concern translators who are considering whether or not to use a borrowed word in their translation. This is the question whether the word from another language has really become a part of the language or not. Is this just a word used by people who happen to know the foreign language, or is it really a part of our language now?

One way to answer this question is to check with speakers who do not know the foreign language. Do they understand the correct meaning of the word? Even more significant, are they using the word in their own speech? If they are, this is strong evidence that the word has become a part of the language. It really has been borrowed by the language, and is not simply a case of individuals mixing languages as they speak. However, in a case like this, it is also important to find out what this word means to these people. Remember that it often happens that borrowed words are used with meanings which are different from what they mean in the original language. In cases like this, if the word is going to be used in the translation, it should only be used in the meaning that it has as a borrowed word. If this is not possible, then the word should not be used at all.

15.7 Foreign words in the Bible

There is one special case that needs to be mentioned where foreign words can and often should be used in a translation. This is the case where a foreign word is used as a foreign word in the original Bible text. For example, there are places where the New Testament, which is written in Greek, uses a Hebrew or Aramaic word. Even here, however, our approach in translation depends on how the original text uses the word.

If the original author seems to assume that the readers would understand the word, then he is probably using it as a borrowed word, and it is probably better for us to simply translate the meaning. But if the original author treated the word as a foreign word and gave the meaning of the word in the language of the main text, then the translator today should do the same thing. In that case, the foreign word can be transliterated and the meaning given. For example, in John 1.38 and 1.41 Hebrew words are used in the Greek text ('rabbi' and 'messiah'). The author does not expect his readers to understand these foreign words, and in each case the meaning of the word is given in Greek.

Other examples of this are in Matthew 27.33, Mark 5.41, 14.36, 15.34, John 20.16, Acts 4.36, Romans 8.15, and Galatians 4.6.

It is hard to find places in the Old Testament where a foreign word is given along with the translation. However, there are some cases where foreign words are used. An example is Isaiah 36 and 37, where the Hebrew text calls the Babylonian officer by his Babylonian title, Rabshakeh. The NRSV follows the Hebrew and also uses this title in English. Many other English translations, however, simply translate this term into English as "chief officer" (REB), "field commander" (NIV), or "official" (TEV).

A better-known example is the word spelled in English as Pharaoh, which is often used in the Hebrew Bible as though it is the name of the king of Egypt. In fact, it is really the title, and in a few places in the Bible this is made clear, because the title Pharaoh is used along with the king's own name (Pharaoh Hophra (Jeremiah 44.30), and Pharaoh Neco or Necho (2 Kings 23.29-35 and Jeremiah 46.2)). In Bible translations it is quite acceptable to translate this word as "king" or "king of Egypt".

In one case in the Old Testament (Judges 12.6) the point in focus is the way that a particular Hebrew word was pronounced. Hebrew people living east of the Jordan apparently had a somewhat different dialect than people to the west, and the easterners (from Gilead) used this as a

way of identifying westerners (from Ephraim) who were trying to enter their lands. The meaning of the word *shibboleth* is something like "the cluster of ripe seeds on a stalk of grain". (For example, it is what Ruth says she wants to go and look for in Ruth 2.2.) But in Judges 12.6, the meaning of the word is insignificant, and most translations do not even bother to try to show the meaning. It is the pronunciation that is in focus. Most translators will probably want to do the same, and simply use two different spellings of the Hebrew word to try to show the two different pronunciations of the word.

15.8 What happens if someone else got there first?

Even though there is not yet a Bible translation in their language, translators will often find that people are already using certain words to express various Bible concepts, such as "cross", "angel", "baptism", and "sin". There may even be words for concepts like "prophet" and "apostle". , If the church has been present for some time, then people will already have found ways to talk about many of these Bible concepts. Should translators simply take these words and use them in the Bible?

This is a situation which translators must deal with very carefully. The two key principles that translators must always remember may be in conflict here. On the one hand, translators want to use their own languages in the way that ordinary people use them. This argues in favor of taking over whatever terms are already in use in the church. On the other hand, translators want to be sure that the meaning of their translation faithfully reflects the meaning of the original. This requires that the words the church is using must be checked carefully before they are simply included in the translation. Do they have the right meaning, or not?

Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that the words being used by churches to express certain concepts do not give the correct meaning from the point of view of the Bible text. In cases like this, even though there is a word already in use, translators will still need to search for the correct way to express the concept, just as though the language still has no word for it. At the same time they must be careful that any changes that they want to make are discussed with church leaders and other intended users, and that these changes are approved by them. If translators unilaterally make changes which are not acceptable, there is a danger that the finished translation itself may be rejected by the people it was intended for.

The truth is that the problem of words which have the wrong meaning is not found only in cases where translations of the Bible have never been done before. Even in languages which have had Bibles for a long time, it is sometimes the case that certain words used in these Bibles do not faithfully give the meaning of the original Bible concept. What sometimes happens in these cases is that scholars who know the correct meaning will try to teach people that "for us Christians, these words mean so-and-so", telling people what the correct meaning should be. But if these words are used regularly with a different meaning, even the Christians will be confused. Many Christians and most non-Christians will get the wrong meaning when they read the Bible. In cases like this, it is good if translators working on a new translation or a revision try to find new ways of expressing the Bible concept, using terms which are more accurate than the expression in regular use.

This problem is certainly not limited to lesser-known languages. Many English Bibles use words which are meant to have a special theological meaning that is quite different from the way the word is used in ordinary speech. "Grace" is one example of this. "Justify" is another. One common meaning of "grace" in English is the ability to do things naturally and elegantly. This is not the way the word is used in English Bibles. A common meaning of "justify" is "to give an explanation for something that is being criticized", a very different meaning from the Bible meaning.

The Bible's meaning of "prophet" ("a person who proclaims a message God has given them") is quite different from what the word means in ordinary English ("someone who can predict the future"). Even "hope" as it is used in ordinary English is not very close to the meaning of the Greek *elpis*, which has a meaning more like the English "confidence". For example, 1 Thessalonians 5.8 is usually translated as "our hope of salvation". But in modern English, "I hope I will be saved" does not show very much conviction about it. What the Greek really means would be better expressed as, "our confidence that God will save us."

These words are used in many English Bibles because they are part of a long tradition of Bible translation into English. People have continued to use these words without carefully assessing how the meaning has changed over the years. However, some translators today are beginning to recognize the problem, and some translations have found better ways of expressing some of these terms.

Early Bible translations in English used the word "charity" to translate the Greek *agape*. However, over the years the meaning of "charity" changed. It no longer meant "love", but something more like "giving gifts to the poor". Because of this, all modern translations into English have dropped the word "charity" in these passages and use "love". If the word "charity" is used in modern English translations, it translates a different Greek word. In the NRSV, "charity" is found only in Acts 9.36. TEV uses "charity" only in Acts 10.4 and 10.31. All of these were translated as "alms" in the KJV. The word "charity" is not found at all in the New Testaments of the NIV or the CEV.

This is an issue which is of course very important for translators who are working on revisions or new translations in a language that already has a Bible translation. It should be a high priority for such translators to look carefully at all technical religious terms in their language, to see whether these terms still have the right meaning, or whether the words used are no longer correct. If words are found which are misleading or simply wrong, translators should try to find a better way to express those concepts in the language. Of course, this is not always easy to do, because in some cases people are used to using the words and they may object if they find that some words that they consider important are missing from the translation.

This is an extremely complicated issue, and it is hard to give advice that will fit every situation. The ideal that translators should aim at is to have a translation that conveys the correct meaning to the readers. However, if there are other factors which may prevent them from doing this, then translators need to carefully consider the options. Is it possible to get together a meeting of church leaders and try to explain the problem to them? If church leaders will accept that there is a problem and help to find a solution, then hopefully they will be able to convince other Christians of the need for the change. However, if for any reason the church leaders are unwilling to accept the need for a change, it may be very difficult to do it.

15.9 Illustrations as possible solutions

Remember that for many Bible translations, the text of the translation is not the only thing that will appear in the printed book. There may be *illustrations* along with the text, and a *word list* at the end of the book. We have already mentioned that when translators are wondering how to help their own people know about things they have never seen, it may be helpful to put a picture with the text, and to have a description in the word list. If people in a certain area do not know lions or camels, it will be hard to find words which will make very clear what these animals are like. But a picture can at least help people to visualize what the animals look like and how big they are. In the case of camels, a picture can also show that camels can carry heavy loads and that people can ride on them.

Translators should remember to make notes as they go along, whenever they find a place where a picture would be helpful, or whenever they use a word that should be included in the word list.

Pictures and explanations cannot make up for bad translation decisions, and they should not be used as an excuse for not thinking carefully about what is the best decision. But they can be very helpful when added to a good translation.

In fact, if a translation is going to be published including illustrations and a word list, translators should constantly remember these other ways of bringing out the full meaning of the text. Where an illustration or a word list entry may help, the translator should make a note of this as they proceed, and if possible select the illustration or draft the note. Too often illustrations are selected at the end of the project, just to make the book look more interesting. That is not the way to put illustrations to their most effective use. And compiling a word list as an after-thought is at best a hit-and-miss affair.

15.10 Bible names

Even in languages where most speakers are not familiar with the Bible, they are likely to be familiar with a few names which originally come from the Bible, because they will have heard of famous people with names like John, Mary, Paul, David, and Joseph, and of places like Israel and Egypt and Jerusalem. In other languages many more Bible names will be familiar to people. But even in cases where many Bible names are well known, the great majority of Bible names will still be strange to most people. How should these names be handled in a Bible translation?

There are at least three different ways that Bible names can be handled in translation.

15.10.1 Well known names

If our language already has names associated with Bible characters, such as John, Peter, Joseph, Mary, Abraham, James, and so on, then it is usually best to use the same form of these names in the translation that is regularly used in ordinary life. Some people may not agree with this. They may feel that the way we pronounce the name is very different from the English form of the name, or the French or Spanish, or whatever the major language of our area is. They may say that we need to bring our own language more in line with these major languages.

People should not let such problems trouble them. Even these major languages often pronounce names in ways that are quite different from the way the name was originally pronounced. For example,

Greek	English	Spanish	French	German
Yakoubos	James	Santiago	Jacques	Jakobus
			[Zhak]	[Yakobus]
Youaneis	John	Juan	Jean	Johan
		[Huan]	[Zhan]	[Yohan]

If these major languages use names for Bible characters that are so different from the original pronunciation, then there is surely no reason why we cannot do the same thing in our own languages as well. It is perfectly all right for us to pronounce these names according to the sounds that are natural for our own languages.

Another problem is how these names should be spelled. In some languages, the names are *pronounced* according to the rules of the language, but written in the same way that the major language writes them. This means that the names become exceptions to the rules for pronouncing our language. Sometimes this custom even requires us to use letters that our own language does not even need. It is difficult to give firm rules for what every language should do, but the general rule is that names should be written according to the spelling rules of our own language, not the rules of another language.

15.10.2 Transliteration of less well-known names

The Bible is full of names of people and places. There are hundreds of them, and most of them will not be familiar to the people we are translating for. In order to write these names, it is usually best to **transliterate**. This means that we write them in such a way that they will follow the normal way of pronouncing words in the language of the translation.

It is usually best for the translation committee or some other group to set rules for how this will be done. These rules can then be used to prepare a list of all the Bible names in our language. Then, when any translators come to a name, they can just refer to the list.

The precise rules that will be needed for transliterating in any given language can only be worked out after studying the sound system and spelling system of that language. It may well be useful to spend time in a translations workshop looking at possible rules for transliteration in the language or languages present in the workshop.

One important issue that needs to be considered is whether the language already has a translation or whether this is the first translation in the language. If there is already a translation, the translators may not be so free to follow the transliteration rules that seem best for the language. There may be more pressure to follow the spellings already used in the earlier translation. Even in this case, if there are good reasons to change, the translators should not give up too easily.

15.10.3 Special cases

When transliterating names, we will ordinarily just follow the rules that our committee has set. However, there are certain cases where it may not be wise to do this. For example, it often happens that our rules will cause two different Bible names to be written in the same way in our language. If the names are very uncommon ones, this may not be a problem. But if one or both of the names is well known, this may cause difficulties, because readers will often be confused about which person or place the text is talking about. In this case, it is often a good idea to bend the rules a bit and make the two names different.

In Tok Pisin of Papua New Guinea, the name Gad (one of the sons of Jacob and one of the twelve tribes of Israel) becomes 'Gat', according to the rules of transliteration. If the rules are followed strictly, the name of the Philistine city of Gath also becomes 'Gat'. In order to keep these two names apart, the name of the city has been spelled 'Get'.

A case similar to this can be seen in the way that English traditionally writes the name of the prophet Hosea as compared with the name of King Hoshea of Israel (2 Kings 15.30). These names are actually identical in Hebrew. But since the two men lived at about the same time, someone apparently made a decision that they should be written in different ways in English, in order to keep them apart.

In some cases, the names may not be identical, but just very similar. Even here, it may sometimes be good to change one or both of them so that they cannot be confused. For example, the rules for transliteration in some languages may cause the names Elijah and Elisha to be written the same or else in a way that makes them very close to each other. Since these two prophets often appear together in the same passages, it is good to make sure that the names are reasonably different and cannot be easily confused, even if this requires breaking the rules of transliteration that we usually follow.

At other times, our rules for transliteration may produce spellings which are the same as or similar to words in our language. If this is likely to sound strange or to make people laugh or to cause any other kind of problem, it is probably a good idea to change the spelling of the name so that people do not make this confusing connection.

For example, some languages do not have a letter 'z' in their alphabet. If these languages are transliterating names from English, it is often decided to transliterate 'z' with the letter 's'. In that case, the rules might require that the name Zin (a desert that the people of Israel wandered through on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land) should be written 'Sin'. This will not be a problem as long as 'Sin' does not have any other meaning in the language. But if these languages happen to use the word 'sin' in the same way as English, it could be very misleading to call this place "the Desert of Sin". It would be better to break the transliteration rules and spell this name in some other way, perhaps 'Sen'.

Another example is the way that the Good News Bible handled the Old Testament name which is usually transliterated as "Shittim". It would be embarrassing for many English speakers to pronounce this name, so the Good News Bible decided to translate it rather than to transliterate it. In that version, the place is called "Acacia Valley".

15.10.4 Descriptive words can be added to names

When using names that are unfamiliar to our readers, it is important to keep one thing in mind. Names are used to identify people or places or events. For people who speak a language that uses a particular name, when they hear that name, they often know what person or thing is being referred to. They can be expected to know that a name is the name of a mountain or river or town or region, and they do not need to include that information in the text.

However, people reading a Bible translation do not come from the same background as the original readers of the Bible. They may not know that the Jordan is a river and that Tabor is a mountain. They are probably not aware that the name Syria in the New Testament refers to a Roman province. They may not know that Antioch is the name of a town.

We have already seen that in order to give our readers the same background information that the original Bible readers had, we often need to add the information about what type of place the name refers to. We may need to say "town Antioch" and "river Jordan" and so on. Remember that this is not adding any extra information to the text. Descriptive words like this simply make explicit information that was shared by the original writers and readers of the Bible by including the more generic term along with the specific name.

In some languages, it is quite natural to use words like "river" and "town" together with the name, and it may be that translators will want to do this every time the name is used. In other languages it could make the translation sound unnatural if it is done all the time. In that case, the information could be added at key points in the text, but it would not need to be repeated every time that the name is used.

15.10.5 Names with meanings

Many Bible names have meanings in Hebrew or Greek. This is one part of the meaning of the text that will usually be lost in translation. Some translators are troubled by this, and they have considered translating names rather than transliterating them. It is hard to give definite advice on this point, since the final decision will be partly determined by what seems right in the culture that the translation is being done for. However, even if translators decide that they would like to translate names, it will probably be impossible to translate all names. For one thing, some Bible names may not have a meaning. Or if the names did have a meaning, the meaning may not be known today. For another thing, some names are already well known to us in their transliterated form --- names like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Abraham, David, Martha, and Peter. What would people think if we tried to translate names like that?

Nevertheless, there are some cases where the meaning of the name is an important part of the meaning of the text. In cases like this, translators must do something to be sure that the meaning is not lost.

One common situation where the meaning of a name is important is found in passages where an explanation is given for why a person or place has a particular name. For example, in Genesis 17:5, God says to Abram, "Your name will no longer be Abram, but Abraham, for I shall make you father of many nations." This makes sense in the original Hebrew, because the name Abraham itself sounds like "father of many". But we need to find some way to make this information clear to our readers. The most common way to do this is to put a footnote in the text.

There are many statements like this in the Old Testament, and they do not really make sense unless we know what the name means. As already mentioned, it is not likely that many translators will want to translate the name Abraham. Some other way must be found to make the meaning clear, either by the way the text is worded or by using a footnote.

On the other hand, there are some names which are not well known, but only occur once or twice in the Bible. If the meaning of these names is important, then probably the best way to handle the situation is to just translate the name. There are two good examples of this in Hosea 1:6-9. Here, Hosea gives two of his children names that contain messages for the people of Israel. Many translations transliterate the names, and then give the meaning in footnotes. But the Hebrew reader got the point immediately. Why should our readers not have the same advantage? Instead of calling the children 'Lo-ruhamah' and 'Lo-ammi' as the NRSV does, it is better to give the children meaningful names, such as 'Unloved' and 'Not-My-People', as the Good News Bible does. This makes the main point of the passage immediately clear to readers of the translation. And it does not force our readers to stumble over strange and difficult names that they will never see again.

[The following example is optional, since some translation officers may not agree with it!] Another example is found in Genesis 31:47. Here Jacob and Laban have just set up a pile of stones as a mark of an agreement they have made. Laban calls this by an Aramaic expression that means, "pile of rocks for remembering" and Jacob calls it by the Hebrew word for the same thing. The Aramaic name is usually transliterated by English Bibles as something like 'Jegar-sahadutha', and the Hebrew name as 'Galeed'. This is the only place in the whole Bible where these names are found. It seems much better to translate this name in a meaningful way (perhaps "Memory Heap" or "Cairn of Warning") than to trouble our readers with unnecessary difficult names. If we follow this suggestion, we will have to word this verse in a way like this: "Laban called this 'Memory Heap' in Aramaic, while Jacob called it by the same name in Hebrew."

The matter of how to deal with names is an important issue for translators, because there are so many unusual names in the Bible. Once a translation project is properly organized, it is important for the team to think carefully about the issues involved, and to set out clearly the principles which are to be followed. Of course, as the translators gain experience and have a fuller understanding of the issues, they may want to reconsider their principles and make some changes to their rules. However, at any given point in the translation process, there should be clear principles to guide the translators in how to deal with Bible names.

15.10.6 Conflicting traditions for writing names

In languages which have been written for some time, it sometimes happens that different groups develop different traditions for writing names. For example, missionaries from different missions may have based the way they write names on Greek, English, German, French, Spanish, or Latin. Obviously if Christians from different traditions are going to be able to share the same scriptures, some compromises will be needed.

It is difficult to give principles that will work in every situation of this kind, but a few points can be kept in mind. First, there must be a desire to find a solution and a willingness to compromise. Second, the leaders of the different churches will have to explain to their own members the reasons for the changes, in order to help ordinary Christians to understand why the changes have been made. Third, the various principles already discussed should be kept in mind during the

search for solutions. For example, it may be that one of the traditions has written the names in a way that is closer to the way that most people actually pronounce them. If possible, it would be good to favor that tradition in the final solution.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT SIXTEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

Bible Translation Frames

Let us imagine a man riding a bus. We call him a passenger on the bus. As a passenger on a bus, he does not have many responsibilities or expectations. At some point he probably has to pay for his trip. He probably also has to watch the road so that he can inform the driver to stop at the correct time. He may prefer to sit alone, so he is watching to see if any seats become empty, so that he can move to the empty seat. But in general, being a passenger on a bus does not involve very much activity on his part, whether mental or physical.

This same man may be a father, with two or three children. Being a father will almost certainly occupy a much greater part of his mental, physical, and emotional life. He may also enjoy fishing, and often go fishing with a group of friends on weekends. The man may be a member of a church and a member of a club of some sort. If his children are in school, then he also plays a role as a parent in connection with the school. We could be creative and add many more aspects of this man's life.

We can say that each of these different aspects of this man's life provides a different framework in which he lives. Each of these different frameworks organize the man's experience, activities, and attitudes in different ways. Depending on which of these frames we focus on, we get a different perspective or point of view about this person's life.

The experience of Bible translation can also be looked at from different perspectives or frames. By focusing on these different frames one at a time, we can get a good overall picture of the whole experience of being a Bible translator.

16.1 The Organizational Frame

For example, one of the frames that affect translators is the organizational frame. This involves the different organizations which are in one way or another involved in the translation project, or which expect to use the Bible translation that will result when the work is finished.

Try to think what different organizations this would include.

Certainly there will be churches. Probably these churches will be organized into one or more denominations, and each denomination may have a different relationship to the translation project. What kinds of relationships might there be?

One or more denominations might be the ones that requested the translation in the first place. They may be the ones paying for the project. The translators may be members of those denominations.

Other denominations may not be involved in the project. Perhaps they will be happy to use the translation when it is published, but they have not become involved in the translation project in any way.

Possibly there may be other denominations which for some reason are not even likely to use the translation when it is finished.

In addition to the churches, there will probably be at least one Bible Society involved with the project. Some of the Bible Society personnel will have particular responsibilities in connection

with the project. The Bible Society may also be providing funds. Different departments of the Bible Society may be involved in different ways, one concerned with the translation process, another concerned about fundraising, another concerned with the costs of the project, another with publications, and so on.

Then there may be other organizations also. Perhaps a literacy committee? A publisher? Various groups concerned in one way or another about the language of the translation? There are many different organizations which can be involved in one way or another in a translation.

How do the translators fit into this organizational frame? Are all of the translators employees of one of the organizations? Do they have different responsibilities to different organizations? Are there tensions between the different organizations that involve the translators? Are the translator's rights and responsibilities clear, or are there areas which have never been fully worked out? How do these different issues and pressures affect the translators' ability to do their work?

All of these organizations, people, problems, issues, and emotions are part of what must be considered when we look at Bible translation from the perspective of the organizational frame.

16.2 Textual frames

We get a completely different perspective on translation when we think about translation issues from the perspective of different kinds of texts, that is, translation as viewed within the textual frame. This can include a number of different issues, for example, the issue of the canon of Scripture, the issue of the original text of Scripture itself, the issue of what kinds of previous translations influence our own translation, and the broad and important issue known as intertextuality.

16.2.1 Canon

The question of the canon of Scripture concerns what books a particular church considers to be a part of sacred Scripture. The most common differences of canon are between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches. There is no difference in the New Testament, but Roman Catholics have a longer Old Testament than most Protestants.

The reason for this difference in canon can be traced back to one of the earliest Bible translations ever made. This was the translation of the Jewish Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek, made for the sake of the many Jews who lived in countries other than Israel (especially Egypt), and who no longer understood Hebrew. This Greek translation of the Jewish Scriptures is usually known as the Septuagint, and abbreviated with the Roman numeral for the number 70: LXX. This translation was made before the time of Christ and was already well known by the time the Christian scriptures were being written.

There were Jewish religious texts written in Greek which came to be included in the Septuagint. Since the Septuagint already included translations of all of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures, this meant that Jews using Greek had a different, larger canon from Jews using Hebrew. The early Christian church mostly used Greek, and the Greek Septuagint soon became the Bible of the church. Later, when translations of the Christian Scriptures were made in other languages, the question arose, "Which books are in the Old Testament?" Was it just the books which are available in Hebrew, and which were accepted as Scripture by the Jews (who had mostly stopped using the Septuagint by that time)? Or did the Old Testament include also the additional books in Greek found in the Septuagint? This is a question that Christians have never been able to agree about, and as a result even today there are different views about what books are a part of the Bible.

It is because of this that in languages which have both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches it is often necessary to publish two separate versions of the Bible. The longer version provides the

full Bible for the Roman Catholics, and the shorter version includes only the books accepted as Scripture by the Protestants.

In and around the Middle East, there are still a number of different Christian churches with roots going back to the early years of Christianity. Many of these churches, such as the Coptic Church in Egypt and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, have their own distinctive canons, as well. The Greek and Russian Orthodox Churches also have their own canons. Some of these churches do have members and congregations in other parts of the world, and wherever these churches are found, their canons are also found. However, in most of Asia and the Pacific, the only two canons that are found are the Roman Catholic and Protestant canons.

16.2.2 The original text

When looking at translation within the frame of textual matters, one of the major issues concerns the text that translators should follow as the base for their translation. The original Bible texts were written long before the invention of printing, so they were all written by hand. For hundreds of years, anyone who wanted a copy of a book of the Bible had to arrange for the book to be copied by hand. Although the scribes who made these copies no doubt tried very hard to be careful and accurate, they could not help but introduce some changes into the text as they made their many copies.

We assume that the great majority of copies of the Bible texts that were made over the centuries are now lost. Nevertheless, many of the old copies are still available. They are prized possessions of various libraries and collections all over the world. The field of textual criticism involves first studying these old copies to see what they say. Then, since there are many differences in wording from one copy to another, scholars must evaluate which of the alternatives is most likely to be the original reading in each particular passage.

The UBS Greek New Testament provides information for translators about textual problems in Greek. Wherever there is a passage with alternate readings which could affect translation, the scholars who prepared this Greek New Testament have given their own evaluation of the evidence. If they feel that a particular reading is very likely to be the correct one, they have given it an “A” reading. Readings that are probably the right one, but not so certain, have a “B” reading. There are also “C” and “D” readings, which mean that the committee of scholars found it very difficult to select the best reading.

For example, in Luke 11.2, a number of old copies of texts begin the Lord's Prayer simply with “Father, may your name be hallowed.” However, a large number of copies have the longer form, “Our Father in heaven.” It seems clear that “Father” alone was all that Luke wrote, and the other copies have taken the longer form from the better-known Matthew 6.9. Therefore, the UBS Greek New Testament says that “Father” here is an “A” reading.

However, later in the same chapter, in Luke 11.33, some of the old manuscripts say “No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a bowl”, and some leave out the words “puts it under a bowl”. This verse is similar to Matthew 5.15 and Mark 4.21, both of which have “under a bowl”. But the committee who prepared the UBS Greek New Testament found it very difficult to weigh the evidence for and against these words in Luke, and they finally gave them only a “C” rating.

There are similar helps available for translators working on the Old Testament, though at the moment these helps are not so convenient to use as the Greek New Testament is.

Different translation projects have different principles regarding how many textual decisions will be made by the translation committee. If the translation is being made into a smaller language in an area where there is a very influential translation in a major language, it is sometimes felt best that this new translation should simply follow the textual decisions that were made in the major

language translation. However, even then, it is important for translators to be aware of the issues. Only in this way will they understand clearly why there is a translation problem in a particular passage.

16.2.3 Influential translations

Up until now we have looked at textual issues related to the books of the Bible as originally written. However, the point just made about influential translations raises a different type of issue in the textual frame of translation. The simplest way to look at this is to ask the question, if we are only now preparing a translation of the Bible into a particular language, then what have Christians in that area done in the past if they wanted to know what the Bible says?

Sometimes the answer is simply, “Nothing”. The speakers of that language have never had access to the Scriptures before. This new translation will be their first experience of the Bible. However, this is probably a rather unusual situation. In many cases, even though there may be no other translation as yet in that particular language, there will nevertheless be Scriptures available in another language that is also known by a certain number of speakers of the target language. In other cases, perhaps there is an older translation already available in the target language, and the new translation is being made because of problems with the old translation or for some other reason.

In all cases where the people who will be using the new translation are already familiar with another translation, this may influence the work of the translation team. Do the people expect this new translation to be quite similar to the translation they are already used to? Or are they hoping for a translation that will be quite different in some ways? These are issues that must be thought through very carefully at the beginning of any new translation project. Decisions must be made and principles agreed to, so that the final translation that is produced will be acceptable to the people it is being prepared for.

16.2.4 Use of Scripture by Scripture

There is another issue within the textual frame that translators must deal with which is usually described by the term “intertextuality”. This refers to the many places where the text of one passage of the Bible is the same as or is in some way similar to the text of another passage.

a) Parallel passages

This can take place in a variety of ways. For example, it seems clear that the two Books of Chronicles used the books of Samuel and Kings as sources. Therefore, there are many passages in Chronicles which are very similar to passages in Samuel and Kings. Some versions of the Bible identify passages like these by giving a reference directly under each section heading that refers the reader to any similar passage or passages. Passages which are similar in this way are known as “parallel passages”.

Another place where many parallel passages are found is in the Gospels, in the New Testament, especially in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is because these three books have so many parallel passages that they are sometimes called the “Synoptic Gospels”.

For translators, it is both easier and more difficult to work with parallel passages. It is easier because when the passages are the same, and one of the passages has already been translated, it is usually possible just to use that translation in the parallel passage. However, in a sense it is also more difficult, because when two passages are parallel, the translator is not free just to translate each one in whatever way seems best. Instead, the passages must be carefully compared. Where they are the same in the original language, they should usually be the same in the language of the translation. But wherever there are significant differences in the original language, these differences should also be reflected in the language of the translation.

Let us look at one example of two parallel passages. The text here is taken from the NRSV.

Matthew 12	Luke 11
³⁹But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here! ⁴²The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!	²⁹When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. ³¹The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! ³²The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!

In Matthew 12.38, some of the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus for a sign. These words are his answer to them. Luke 11 does not mention the scribes and Pharisees, but only the crowd, which kept growing larger and larger. Because of this, in Matthew, this speech is an answer to a question, while in Luke it is another point that is taught to the crowd.

Jesus' words are expressed somewhat differently in Matthew 12.39 and Luke 11.29, but the meaning is basically the same. The main difference is that Matthew mentions that Jonah was a prophet. The word "generation" refers to the people living at that time. In many languages it will be necessary to translate in that way, so that one would not refer to "it" but to "them", that is "the people". These comments would seem to include the people that Jesus was speaking to at the time, although certainly not only them. Because of this, it might be necessary in some languages to use "you" rather than "them" here.

Matthew 12.40 and Luke 11.30 make basically the same point, but they express it quite differently. In Matthew, Jesus mentions the details from the story of Jonah, and uses "three days and three nights" as a way to connect Jonah's story to the Son of Man. In Luke, Jesus assumes that the readers know all the details, and he uses the word "sign" as a way to connect Jonah's story with the Son of Man. Only in Luke is Nineveh mentioned at this point.

The last two verses are almost the same in Matthew and Luke, but they come in opposite order. Thus, Matthew 12.41 is the same as Luke 11.32, and Matthew 12.42 is the same as Luke 11.31.

There are slight differences in wording between Matthew and Luke in these last two verses, but there does not seem to be any difference in meaning. It might be necessary to translate them the same way in some languages. However, if a translator wants to reflect the differences very precisely, it would be possible to refer to the people of this generation in a slightly different way in Matthew 12.42 and Luke 11.31.

The UBS has a publication called *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* which will help translators to make the kind of comparison that we have been looking at here.

b) Quotations and allusions

A second way in which one passage may be similar to another passage is when one passage quotes or alludes to another passage. In this case, too, translators need to be aware of the relationship between the two passages. If the two passages are identical in the original, they should usually be identical in the translation. But if there are significant differences between the two, these differences should be reflected in the language of the translation.

There is one particular problem in this area which is related to the textual problems of canon which we discussed earlier. This sometimes happens when a New Testament book quotes an Old Testament book. In our Bibles today, the Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew, and the New Testament is translated from the Greek. However, as we have already seen, the people who wrote the New Testament often used the Greek Septuagint as their own Bible. They were writing in Greek, and when they wanted to quote an Old Testament passage, they often quoted directly from the Septuagint. In some verses, the Septuagint translation is different from the Hebrew. If the New Testament writers quoted one of those verses, it may seem in a modern translation that the New Testament writer was quoting very freely. However, the problem was not actually caused by the New Testament writer, but by the difference between the Hebrew original and the Greek translation.

For example, in John 1.23, when the people ask John the Baptist to explain how they are to understand his work, “He answered in the words of the prophet Isaiah, ‘I am a voice crying in the wilderness, “Make straight the way for the Lord.”’” This is a quote from Isaiah 40.3. But putting the voice in the wilderness comes from the LXX. In the Hebrew the wilderness fits into the sense in a different way: “A voice cries, ‘Clear a road through the wilderness for the Lord.’”

Another example can be seen in 1 Corinthians 5.13. Here Paul quotes Deuteronomy 13.5 and 17.7 to say “Drive out the evil person from among you.” However, in these verses the Hebrew text is actually giving instructions for stoning someone who has broken the law. The Hebrew text then explains this by adding, “You must get rid of the wickedness in your midst.” It is the LXX which talks about “driving out the evil person from among you”.

16.2.5 Text as a part of language

In addition to the other issues that can be considered from the perspective of the textual frame, there is one very basic issue. That is that whenever we use language we are making texts. These texts must hang together and make sense. There are devices in every language for showing what are the important points and what is background; for relating different ideas to each other in different ways; for marking the beginning and ending of a text; and so on. Obviously all translators will have to make use of these devices when producing their translations, and it is not necessary to do more here than to simply mention this fact.

However, there is one additional point which it is worth stressing. That is this: every language has its own text-forming devices. Translators are always in danger of following too literally the devices used in the language they are translating from, and therefore missing some of the important ways of producing meaningful and effective texts in their own languages. Translators should therefore give emphasis to their own languages. They should read or listen to good examples of texts produced naturally in their own language, and note the ways the texts are organized. Good translations should use naturally and effectively the forms that are in regular use in their language.

16.3 Social and cultural frames

Bible Translation always requires that translators become deeply involved with cultures quite different from their own. The Bible was originally written thousands of years ago, in a historical and cultural situation very different from today's world. Certainly there may be aspects of the Bible cultures which are similar to aspects of some of today's cultures. For example, the activities referred to in the Bible related to growing wheat and barley may seem quite similar to what is

done in some parts of the world today. Nevertheless, even if there are points that are similar, the Bible cultures are quite different from our cultures today.

Translators therefore must develop a deep understanding of the way that social and cultural frameworks influenced the writers of the Bible and of the way that social and cultural frameworks will influence the way that the Bible is read and understood in different cultures today. As much as possible, a Bible translator must become an expert on the culture of the Bible. But at the same time, Bible translators must become very sensitive to social and culture issues within their own cultures.

16.3.1 Understanding the cultures of the Bible

Anyone who wants to translate the Bible will need to make a serious effort to understand the cultures of the Bible world. The cultural background surrounds everything that is said in the Bible. If it is not understood, it is easy to misunderstand a passage or even to give the wrong meaning in a translation. Whole books have been written about the cultures of the Bible, and it is obviously only possible to give a few examples here. Let us look at three fairly ordinary aspects of life. First, the use of animals. Second, slavery. And third, rivers and other sources of water.

a) What domestic animals were kept by people in the Bible cultures?

The most important domestic animals found in the Bible were sheep and goats. In addition, cows, donkeys, and camels were also kept. Sheep were valuable because of the wool they provided, which was woven into cloth. Sheep were also a source of food, and their hides were made into leather.

Goats were a source of meat, and their milk was used to make curds and cheese. Although goats do not provide wool, goat hair was still made into rough cloth that was good for sacks and for making tents and carpets. Goat skins could also be made into containers for various kinds of liquid.

Cows (oxen) were also a source of meat, milk, and leather, but they were also work animals. They pulled the plows and helped with the threshing.

Sheep, goats, and cows were all used as sacrificial animals, as well.

The main animal used for transport was the donkey. Horses were used for war, but were not owned by the ordinary people. Camels were also used for transport, and their hair was also made into rough cloth.

Pigs were kept by the peoples living around the Israelites (such as the Philistines), mainly as a source of meat.

Some fowl were kept for food, although they are rarely mentioned in the Bible. There were at least chickens and pigeons. The Bible's most famous chicken is the rooster which crowed on the night that Peter betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26.34, 74-75 and parallels). Some sort of fowl are mentioned as food in Nehemiah 5.18 (GNT calls them "chickens"), and many translations have a rooster in Pro 30.31. Eating eggs is referred to in Luke 11.12, and a hen is mentioned in Matthew 23.37. Doves and pigeons are mentioned mainly in connection with the sacrifices made by poorer people who could not afford the larger animals (as in Luke 2.24).

Dogs were kept, but most references to them show that they were not considered important or useful. However, dogs did help in herding the sheep, as Job 30.1 shows (although even this passage shows the low position of dogs). To call someone a dog was a great insult (1 Sam 17.43, 2 Sam 16.9). Nevertheless, Ecclesiastes 9.4 does make the point that "a living dog is better than a dead lion". Many Bible passages give the impression that there were always dogs around looking for food (for example, Exodus 22.31).

Cats are not mentioned in the Bible except in one verse in the Deuterocanon (Baruch 6.21, also known as Letter of Jeremiah 22).

However, to understand this aspect of the culture of the Bible we need to do more than simply to list the animals that were raised by the people of Israel. We need to understand all of the cultural activities that were connected with raising those animals.

For example, sheep had to be looked after. They had to be taken to places where they could find grass to eat, and they had to be protected from various dangers that threatened them. This was such a common aspect of life that there are passages throughout the Bible that refer to it. For example, look at Genesis 29.1-10, 1 Samuel 17.31-37, and Luke 15.3-7.

Another important activity connected with sheep was shearing them for their wool. This is mentioned in 1 Samuel 25.2-11, 2 Samuel 13.23-24, 2 Kings 3.4, and Isaiah 53.7.

Similarly, there are many passages that talk about the work that oxen do. Some examples are Exodus 23.12, Numbers 7.1-3, Deuteronomy 22.10, 25.4, 1 Kings 19.19-21, 1 Chronicles 13.5-10, 21.18-25 (this refers to oxen pulling threshing sledges to separate the wheat from the stalks), Job 1.14-15, and Luke 14.19.

Donkeys are described at their tasks in passages like Exodus 23.5, Numbers 22.21-27, Judges 5.10, 1 Samuel 25.18, 42, 2 Samuel 16.1-2, 1 Kings 13.13-14, 2 Kings 4.18-25, 2 Chronicles 28.14-15, Nehemiah 13.15, Isaiah 30.24, and John 12.14-15.

Sheep, goats, and oxen (cows) are frequently mentioned in connection with sacrifices.

In addition to these more normal activities, the larger animals were often part of the booty captured by the victorious soldiers in a war. Or they were stolen by raiders, as in Job 1.14-15. A lost donkey is an important character in the story about Saul in 1 Samuel 9 and 10. 2 Kings 6.25 mentions a donkey's head being sold as food, and Jeremiah 22.19 mentions a dead donkey being buried. All of these activities and more were an important part of the Bible culture.

Finally, it is not surprising that something that played such a big part in the culture should also become part of the common figurative language. We will look at that aspect of the culture below.

b) Slavery

Old Testament

One feature of the social life of the Bible which is often very difficult for people to understand is the practice of slavery. Of course there are many other societies which have practiced slavery of various kinds, so slavery will not necessarily be a difficult idea for everyone. However, for people in some societies it is a concept almost impossible to understand.

Essentially, slavery refers to a situation where a person becomes an item that can be owned by another person. The owner of a slave is called the slave's master (sometimes "mistress" is used if the owner is a woman, but "mistress" has other meanings in English). Like other property, a slave could be sold to another person. The slave had to work for the master and was not free to leave the master's service, as an ordinary servant or other employee would usually be. Exodus 21.20-21 puts it quite plainly: "the slave is the owner's property."

Slavery was a common feature of most (if not all) of the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean. It was by no means an unusual aspect of the cultural practices of Israel. If slaves married and had children, the children too were considered to be slaves of the parents' master.

Perhaps the most common way in which people became slaves was through warfare. People captured in war were regularly made slaves (1 Sam 4.9). However, as already mentioned, people could also become slaves by birth. In whatever way people became slaves, they could always be sold to others, so that many people owned slaves that they had purchased. The law for circumcision in Genesis 17.12-13 states that not only family members should be circumcised, but the male slaves, as well. It then states that this applied to all slaves, whether “born in your house” or “bought with your money from any foreigner”. The mention of the foreigner suggests that the slave is not an Israelite. In fact, one gets the impression that in Israel it was generally preferred that slaves should be foreigners rather than Israelites (Lev 25.44-46).

Slaves were not free to leave their master's service legally. However, they did sometimes run away (Gen 16.6, 1 Kin 2.39-40). And, as Job 3.19 points out, once they arrive in the land of the dead, “slaves are free from their masters”.

Another way in which people might become slaves was by selling themselves or their children. This would ordinarily happen because of serious financial problems. Either they had no money to live on, or they were badly in debt, and selling themselves as slaves was the only way to pay the debt. In fact, it appears that a creditor could take defaulting debtors as slaves whether they wanted to sell themselves or not. This method of becoming a slave was apparently fairly common. The purpose of the miracle described in 2 Kings 4.1-7 was to help a widow get money so that she could pay her debt and her two children would not be made slaves. But in other cases, there was no miracle, and people did become slaves (Neh 5.1-5 and Amo 2.6). Some of the laws of Moses deal with this issue (Lev 25.39-43, Deu 15.12-18).

The laws of Moses accept the fact of slavery without any question. However, these laws do include various kinds of protections for slaves. For one thing, the laws state very clearly that the Sabbath applied equally to free people and to slaves. Masters could not force the slaves to work on the Sabbath. In Deuteronomy 5.14-15, this regulation is connected to the fact that until God saved them, all of the people of Israel were the slaves of the Egyptians. Therefore they should be particularly sensitive to the needs of a slave. Exodus 21.26-27 specifies that if a master strikes a slave in such a way as to cause the slave to lose an eye or a tooth, then in compensation, the slave must be given their freedom. Leviticus 25.39-43 states that if because of economic distress a fellow Israelite is forced into slavery, this cannot be regarded as a permanent situation, as with foreign slaves. When the year of jubilee comes, all Israelite slaves are to be freed. In Deuteronomy 15.13-15, where this law is repeated, it adds that when the slave is freed, the master should not send the slave away empty-handed, but should also generously provide animals, grain, and wine, so that the now-freed slave has what is needed to start a new life.

Slavery is accepted as a fact of life, and various laws apply specifically to them. However, in the historical portions of the Old Testament, slaves rarely appear. This is probably not surprising, given their role in society. But it could lead some to ask how important slavery really was. One of Jeremiah's prophecies against the people (34.8-22) was based on the dishonest way in which they had dealt with their slaves. Another possibly significant detail regarding the status of slavery is found in Nehemiah 7.66-67. This passage lists the number of people who on one occasion returned from Babylon to Judah. According to this passage, the total number of exiles who returned was more than 42,000. Yet these people, returning from captivity in a foreign land, brought with them more than 7000 slaves!

New Testament

Turning to the New Testament, the situation is rather confusing. Certainly slavery was very common in the Roman empire, and we do meet at least one slave (Onesimus, who had run away) in the book of Philemon. However, the Greek word for “slave” (*doulos*) apparently has quite a wide range of meaning, and as a result the English versions are very inconsistent in the way they translate the word. Many times it is translated “servant”; although “slave” is reasonably common,

in most translations it is used less often than “servant”. Because of this, it is difficult to speak definitely about slavery in the New Testament.

In addition to Onesimus, there are various persons in the New Testament who are called “slaves”, at least in some translations. In John 4.51, when the government official is on his way home, he is met by his *douloi* (plural of *doulos*). Are these people his servants or slaves? According to NRSV and NAB, they are slaves, but CEV, GNT, NIV, NLT, REB, and RSV call them “servants”. The same question comes up in John 18.18. Who were the people standing with the guards warming themselves at the fire in the high priest's courtyard? The versions divide between “slaves” and “servants” just as they did in 4.51.

On the other hand, the person who had his ear cut off in Matthew 26.51 (and parallels in all the Gospels) is called the high priest's “slave” in GNT, RSV, and NRSV, but “servant” in CEV, NAB, NIV, NLT, and REB. So three of the versions have changed the term from what they used in the two passages just discussed. There is a similar problem with the centurion's highly valued *doulos* who is healed in Luke 7.2-10. This man is a “slave” in CEV, GNT, NAB, RSV, and NRSV, but a “servant” in NIV, NLT, and REB.

There is a similar problem with another word. In Galatians 4.22-31 Paul gives a particular interpretation of a passage from Genesis. He compares Sarah and Hagar, calling one the free woman and the other a slave. The word he uses for the slave woman here is *paidiskē*. Various people are called by this term in Matthew 26.69 (and parallels) and in Acts 12.13 and 16.16. In the Gospels this person is called a “servant girl” or “maid” in most of the English translations. Rhoda in Acts 12.13 is a “servant” or “maid”. However, the person in Acts 16.16 is called a “slave girl” in all of these translations except GNT, which calls her a “servant”. (However, since GNT refers to this girl's “owners” in the same verse, one has the feeling that they too should have called her a slave.)

Returning to the more common term *doulos*, we find these people repeatedly in Jesus' parables (for example, Mat 13.27-28, 18.23-33, 21.34-36, 22.3-10, 24.45-51, 25.14-30, and parallels). Are they slaves or servants? NRSV seems to consistently call them “slaves”, but the other English translations more usually call them “servants”. Occasionally other expressions, such as “officials” or “employees” are used.

In summary, we can definitely say that slavery was common in the Roman empire, and there were no doubt slaves in Palestine, as well. But it seems that in most of the actual occurrences in the New Testament, it is a bit difficult to be sure exactly what kind of relationship the *doulos* had with the master. This is certainly true if the English translations are to be trusted as a guide.

c) Rivers and other sources of water

Water was a problem in ancient Israel. There were certain seasons when rain fell, but there was usually no rain at all from May to October. Some streams had water in them only during and after the rain; for the rest of the year they were just dry stream-beds. Streams like this are known as *wadis* in the Middle East, and called by that term in some translations, such as NRSV and REB. There are more than a dozen of these wadis named in the Bible. In fact the only real river of Israel is the Jordan, and in many parts of the world even the Jordan would be considered a relatively insignificant river. The Kishon, which flows through the Valley of Jezreel in southern Galilee, is a small river which was usually dry during the summer. However, once it leaves the Valley and flows across the Plain of Acco toward the coast, it continues to flow throughout the year.

The Jordan River flows southward from Mount Hermon in the north to Lake Galilee. It then continues almost directly south to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is the lowest point on earth, well below sea level. It has no outlet, so it is very salty, and nothing will grow near it.

In the north, in the region known as Galilee, the land was more fertile. However, especially in the mountainous region of Samaria and Judah, the water problem was a major fact of life. This is the reason that dew, the water that forms on plants and other things during the night, was considered to be so important and is mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament.

Most important in dry areas are natural springs, where water comes bubbling out of the ground. There are two of these near the city of Jerusalem, the Gihon Spring (1 Kings 1.32-40, 2 Chronicles 32.30) and the spring known as En-Rogel (2 Sam 17.17, 1 Kings 1.9). However, the people of Israel could not rely only on what nature provided. They had to find ways of catching and holding water for themselves.

In order to locate underground water, wells were dug. In addition, water was collected and stored in cisterns and reservoirs. In some of the larger cities there were elaborate water systems, bringing water from some water source to a pool or cistern where residents could go to get water. A number of these water shafts have been discovered by archaeologists working in Israel (for example, at Hazor, Gezer, Megiddo, Gibeon, and Jerusalem).

The well was an important gathering place in a village, and wells are often mentioned in the Bible. Women would go to the well to collect water in their jars, which they would then carry back to the house. Cisterns were also dug into the rock as places to collect rainwater. They were usually covered, and had to be cleaned at least once a year. Cisterns were often deep, with a small opening at the top, so that one would get water from them in the same way as getting water from a well. If the well or cistern was covered, one would have to remove the cover first, then lower a dipper down to dip up water. Often each family had their own cistern, although there were also public water-storage cisterns in the cities. Reservoirs were similar to cisterns, but were usually larger. Sometimes they were underground, sometimes they were pools at ground level.

At least by New Testament times, boats were in regular use on Lake Galilee. However, there is no mention of a boat being used on the Jordan. There were also no bridges in the land of Israel. The word “bridge” does not occur anywhere in the Bible. If people wanted to cross a river, especially the Jordan, they had to know the places where it was possible to walk across. These places are known as fords. In times of war it was important to command the fords of the Jordan (see Judges 3.28 and 12.5).

Also by New Testament times the Romans, who were master engineers, had built aqueducts to supply water to at least some of the cities, such as Sebaste (Samaria) and King Herod's port city of Caesarea. But these aqueducts are not mentioned in the Bible.

Because of the problems caused by lack of water, water became an important element in at least two other aspects of the culture. Prophets telling of a time when God would pour his blessings on the people told of a time when water would be plentiful, as in Isaiah 41.18, where God says:

“I will make rivers flow among barren hills
and springs of water run in the valleys.
I will turn the desert into pools of water
and the dry land into flowing springs.” (GNT)

Similarly, a person who was doing very well in life could be compared to a garden with plenty of water, as we see in Isaiah 58.11:

“The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.” (NRSV)

Let us look at one last example. In the book of the prophet Jeremiah (2.10-11), there is another moving example of a prophetic message which is based on the cultural understanding of water:

“Be appalled, O heavens, at this
 be shocked, be utterly desolate,”
 Says the Lord
 “for my people have committed two evils:
 they have forsaken me,
 the fountain of living water,
 and dug out cisterns for themselves,
 cracked cisterns,
 that can hold no water.” (NRSV)

16.3.2 Actions

In some parts of the world, if a man feels hot, he will pull up his shirt around his chest, so that his stomach and sides are open to the air. In other parts of the world, a man would not think of doing that. Either he will just put up with the heat, or he will take off his shirt completely.

In Australia, if a man feels slightly chilly, he will fold his sweater (which he may call a “jumper”) and lay it over his shoulders and back, to keep off the chill. In America, it would never occur to a man to do something like that.

In some places, a man who is seated may absent-mindedly shake his legs back and forth. In other places, such an action would be considered improper.

In the highlands of Papua New Guinea, if a man is worn out from wandering around town, he will find a patch of ground somewhere, lie down, and fall fast asleep. In the coastal areas of Papua New Guinea, a person would feel embarrassed to do something like that in public.

In some parts of the world, it is quite natural to bathe naked in public. In other parts of the world, a person would find it emotionally impossible to even consider doing such a thing.

In some parts of the world, people know how to discretely clean out their noses by putting their finger beside their nose and blowing. In other parts of the world, people need to use a cloth to accomplish the same purpose.

In some parts of the world, it is quite natural for a man who wants to urinate to go and stand or crouch by the side of the road. In other areas, a person would never think of doing such a thing in full public view. Interestingly, this custom was apparently very common in ancient Israel. Therefore, there is an expression in Hebrew, translated by the King James Version as “everyone who pisseth against the wall”, which means “every single male among them”. It is found in passages such as 1 Samuel 25.22, 34, 1 Kings 14.10, 16.11, 21.21, and 2 Kings 9.8. The REB replaces this with a good English equivalent: “every mother's son of them”. The meaning is rather like the English “every last one of them”, but the Hebrew expression focuses only on the men.

For a New Testament example of a cultural action, look at Luke 7.36-50 in the NRSV or GNT. We are told that Jesus went to have dinner with a Pharisee and “sat down to eat” (GNT) or, more generally, “took his place at the table” (NRSV). Then, in verse 38, a woman came into the room and “stood behind Jesus, by his feet”. In how many cultures is it possible to come up behind someone who is sitting at a meal and do something to that person's feet?

However, even if this might be possible in your culture, because of the way you usually sit at a meal, it is still likely that the picture you have of what was happening is quite different from the practice in Jesus' time. In fact, for most of us today, it is difficult to imagine eating in the position that was common in Palestine at the time of Jesus. Apparently, around three sides of the table, wide couches were placed. Each couch was big enough for three people. A person would lie on

the couch, resting on their left arm. The head would be near the table, and the feet stretched out away from the table. One would then take the food with one's right hand in order to eat. In some English Bible translations this eating position is translated as "reclining at table". One would thus have one's back to the person on one's left, but be facing the person on one's right.

Another New Testament passage affected by this custom is John 13.21-26. RSV tells us in verse 24 that the disciple "whom Jesus loved was lying close to the breast of Jesus". If people interpret these words according to their own cultures, this will probably seem like an extraordinary thing to do at a dinner table. But for the culture of the time, it is equivalent to saying that the disciple was the one sitting on Jesus' right-hand side.

And what did this disciple do in verse 25? NIV says that he "leaned back against Jesus". If seen from the point of view of other cultures, this will also seem like a very strange thing to do. However, if we understand the relative positions of this disciple and Jesus, we will see that REB's translation is quite appropriate: "That disciple leaned back close to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, who is it?'" Presumably he would not only have leaned back closer to Jesus, but he would also have had to turn his head to his own left, so as to be able to speak privately with Jesus. In any case, it should be clear that when one eats in a position like this, one's feet are very accessible to someone who approaches from behind!

All of these examples show that even actions which seem completely natural in one culture, actions which people do out of habit and without even thinking about them, are nevertheless actions that people have learned to do by growing up in that particular culture. If they had grown up in a different culture, they might not even think of such an action as an option. Or they might even be very embarrassed to do it. Culture is a far-reaching aspect of life, and Bibles translators need to understand as deeply as possible the culture of the Bible times. They also need to become aware of their own cultures in a new way, so that they understand the significance of things that they may simply have taken for granted in the past. Actions are therefore an important aspect of translation viewed from the perspective of the social and cultural frame.

16.3.3 Genres

In different cultural situations, it is appropriate to use language in different ways. Even if we do not know the situation, we can often tell from just a few words of language used in that situation what the situation is. Imagine the following situations in your own culture, and whether they call for particular kinds of language:

- a love song
- a prayer
- a mother scolding her children
- someone making a point indirectly by telling a story
- a politician giving a speech
- a news report on the radio
- an angry person cursing someone

Not all of these will be found in some languages. For example, if a language is never used on the radio, obviously there will be no special way of giving news reports on the radio. However, we might expect similar situations to be found in many cultures and languages. But this is only a small sample of the kind of situations that require a special use of language. The use of language that particularly fits a certain cultural situation is called *genre*, and it is an important aspect of the social and cultural frame of translation.

The study of genre is important for Bible translators in at least two ways. First, the translator needs to know as much as possible about the genres that were used in the Bible languages. If the genre can be identified, it often gives us a lot of information about how to understand the text, and what the text was intended to accomplish.

Second, translators need to learn as much as possible about the different genres which are used by their own languages. No doubt they already have a subconscious knowledge of most of these genres. But in order to carry out the task of translation well, translators should study the genres of their own languages more consciously. They should identify what genres there are and the situations that they are used in. What are the characteristic features of these genres? What meaning do these genres carry? That is, when a person from within the culture recognizes that a certain genre is being used, how does it make them feel? Is it moving? Ridiculous? Effective? Embarrassing?

In addition to learning about genres in the Bible languages and in the target language, many translators will need to be able to recognize also genres in the language that they are translating from. For example, can you tell what English genres are signalled by the following passages?

- 1) Out of the eater came something to eat
Out of the strong came something sweet
- 2) Once upon a time the trees set out ...
- 3) If it please your majesty, let ...
- 4) Lord God of Israel, there is no God like you ...
- 5) May your prosperity increase!
- 6) And now, not to take up too much of your time, I crave your indulgence for a brief statement of our case.

Comments:

1) The first example, from Judges 14.14, is a riddle. In English, riddles are often given in short rhymes, just like Samson's riddle here. For example,

Little Nancy Etticoat
In a white petticoat
With a red nose
The longer she stands
The shorter she grows.
Who is she? (Answer: a candle)

(For those not familiar with English poetry, what is significant here is the rhythm of the lines and the two rhymes: Etticoat / petticoat, and nose / grows)

2) Stories in English that begin “Once upon a time” are usually called “fairy tales”. They are usually traditional stories about things that people today do not really believe could happen, but sometimes these stories do teach a moral. This example is from Judges 9.8.

3) This is a formal request made to a king or queen. These words are found in several passages (Ezra 5.17, Nehemiah 2.7, Esther 1.19, 3.9, and 9.13), because the same basic situation is found in all of these passages.

4) This is a formal prayer. The example is from Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 8.23 (and 2 Chronicles 6.14).

5) This is from a blessing, in this case from Daniel 4.1 and 6.25.

6) These flowery words are spoken by a lawyer to someone who has to judge a case. They are found in Acts 24.4.

All of the above examples are taken from the Revised English Bible. The REB is of course a translation of the original text, but it has sometimes done a very good job of using words appropriate to well known English genres, so that English readers will immediately recognize what is taking place. It is a good example of what translators should aim to accomplish in their own languages.

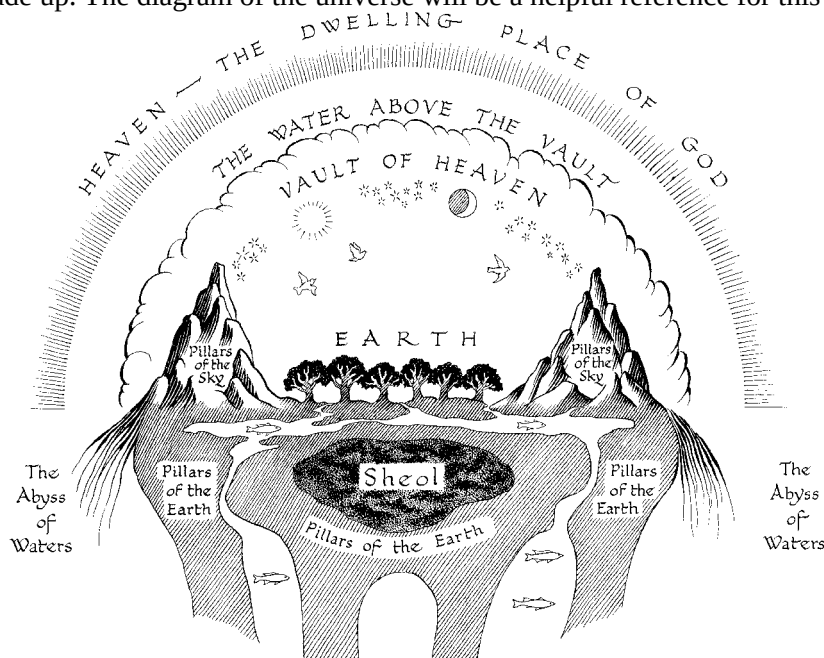
16.4 Cognitive frames

Every time people use language, they are doing a number of things at the same time. There may be a number of different goals or purposes that are accomplished in any one example of language. But there are at least three basic functions of language that are almost always present. The first of these is expressing ideas. In order to do this, we combine the words of our language into different sentences, to express the thoughts that we want to express. This aspect of language use is called the “cognitive component” of language. Second, language involves one person relating to another person or other people in various ways, and these relations are usually present whenever we use language. This is called the “interpersonal component” of language. Finally, there is the “textual component” already mentioned. This refers to the way that people organize what they are saying so that others can follow their thought and understand what the text means.

Let us look first at the cognitive framework of language. The cognitive component of language can be thought of as divided into a number of overlapping semantic domains, dealing with different areas of meaning. These semantic domains can be arranged or organized in a variety of ways. We will look at just two examples, the Hebrew world view, and the Hebrew way of classifying living creatures.

16.4.1 The Hebrew world view

Every culture has its own view of how the world is made and holds together. Although people who speak English today may tend to accept the scientific point of view in principle, the language nevertheless still reflects older ideas. For example, we may know scientifically that it is the earth that turns and that the sun basically stays in the same place in relation to the earth. Nevertheless, we still talk about the sun “rising” and “setting”. By studying the terminology used in the Hebrew Bible, we can get a rather detailed understanding of how the ancient Hebrews thought that the world was made up. The diagram of the universe will be a helpful reference for this discussion.



Many of the details can be seen in the way creation is described in Genesis 1. Gen 1.2 suggests that before the earth itself was created, there was a great sea of water, the *tehom* or “deep”. Then, in 1.6-8, God creates something which works as a barrier to hold back the water. This barrier, *raqia'* in Hebrew, is translated variously in English as “firmament”, “dome”, “vault”, “expanse”. This dome is given the name “Sky”, but it is understood as holding back the water which is above it. However, there are “windows of heaven” which open to let the rain fall through. Thus, in the story of the flood, these windows are opened in Gen 7.11, to allow the great rain to pour through, and they are closed in 8.2. The creation of this firmament is mentioned poetically in Job 37.18, Psa 104.2, Isa 40.22, and Amos 9.6. The windows are mentioned in 2 Ki 7.2, Isa 24.18, and Mal 3.10.

In Gen 1.9-10, the waters of the deep are gathered together so that the dry land appears. The dry land is called “Earth”, and the waters of the deep, which continue to surround the earth, are called “Sea”. However, from this ancient point of view, the waters of the deep are also to be found under the earth. It is these waters that flow out in natural springs. And again, at the time of the flood, the “fountains of the deep” also poured out water (Gen 7.11) until they were finally closed (8.2; see also Pro 8.28).

Finally, in Gen 1.14-18, God puts various lights in the firmament: the sun, the moon, and the stars. These give light to the earth below.

Other aspects of this ancient view of the universe are found in other parts of the Bible. God's heaven was thought of as being somewhere above all of this. Thus in Mark 1.10, Jesus sees the sky being torn apart so that the Spirit can come through to him from the heaven above the sky. Somewhere below the earth was the land of the dead, known in Hebrew as Sheol. It is not very clear what exactly is understood to be happening in 1 Samuel 28.12-15, but it is significant that Samuel's spirit is seen as “coming up out of the earth”.

Occasionally there are references to great columns or pillars which strengthen the earth (1 Sam 2.8, Psa 75.3 (75.4 in Hebrew) and hold up the sky (Job 26.11). These are sometimes translated in English as “foundations”. Job 9.6 suggests that an earthquake is caused by the pillars of the earth trembling.

Other references can be seen as fitting in various ways into this broad picture. Job 26.13 may suggest that God keeps the sky polished by breathing on it with his breath, the winds. It is possible that when there are references to the “pavement” in God's heaven, these are thought of as the upper part of the “firmament”. In Exodus 24.10, this pavement is certainly compared with the sky. Other possible references are Job 22.14, Psalm 150.1, Ezekiel 1.22-26, and Revelation 4.6 and 15.2. However, this suggestion would seem to be incompatible with the idea of the waters above the firmament, so it may not be what is intended in these places.

This semantic domain of the cosmos or universe according to Hebrew thinking is not really a major domain in the sense of occurring frequently. It is more a matter of background assumptions which are usually not made explicit. The contexts in which it does become explicit are usually contexts which talk about God's greatness, either in terms of God's creation of the world, or in terms of God's great power and wisdom. Some aspects of the total picture are mentioned more frequently, however, such as Sheol, the world of the dead, and of course “heaven and earth”, or “the earth and the sky”.

16.4.2 The Hebrew view of the animal world

It is not only the total view of the world that each language tends to understand in its own way. The separate parts of the world, too, tend to be divided up in distinctive ways in different languages. The Hebrew way of viewing living creatures is an interesting example of this.

It is common for languages to have a general term for all living creatures, and then to divide living creatures into a number of different major groups. These major groups may be further subdivided in various ways until we come to the words used for individual types of living creatures. This whole way of looking at the world is usually referred to as a "classification". Therefore, what we are looking at now is the Hebrew way of classifying living creatures.

However, there are various problems that we meet when trying to study this aspect of the Hebrew language. The first problem is that basically all that we know about the Hebrew language is what is found in the Old Testament. There is very little other information and very few other texts written in Biblical Hebrew. The second problem is that the Bible was probably composed over a period of several hundred years, and it may reflect different dialects of Hebrew. Thus we cannot be sure that we are studying a single system. It is quite possible that over the period of time that the Bible was being written, the classification system may have changed one or more times.

A final point to make is not particularly about Hebrew, but about languages in general. It is often the case that one word can function on different levels of the classification system. Thus, in English, in one sense 'humans' can be considered to be a kind of animal. But at another level, humans are often contrasted with animals.

Let us see then what can be said about the way animals are classified in Hebrew. To begin with, one cover term for all animals seems to be *nephesh hayyah* (Gen 1.20-30, 2.7, 2.19, 9.10-16, Ezk 47.9) "living creatures". These are divided into:

- humans ('*adam*)
- land animals (*behemah*)
- flying creatures ('*oph hasshamayim*)
- water creatures (*degath hayyam*)

The term *behemah* is one example of a term that can occur on more than one level. In some cases, *behemah* refers to all land animals. For example, in Proverbs 30.30, the lion is a *behemah*. However, in other cases, *behemah* is contrasted with other animals, in which case it refers to "domestic animals".

At one level of the Hebrew system there is a term *remesh* (which is sometimes given in a longer form meaning the *remesh* which swarm over the earth). The term *remesh* (sometimes called by another term *sherets*) seems to include all creatures which are found in large numbers, and therefore which cannot be counted. This includes small animals (such as rats and mice), lizards, and insects (whether walking or flying), and it can also be used of some sea creatures as well.

In addition, when *behemah* is used for "domestic animals", *hayyah* (sometimes used for all "living creatures") can be contrasted with them to mean "wild animals". But both of these are distinguished again from the *remesh*. Thus in Gen 7.14, living creatures (except for water creatures) are divided into four groups:

- wild animals (*hayyah*)
- domestic stock (*behemah*)
- small, uncountable creatures (*remesh*)
- birds ('*oph*)

The same list is found in Gen 7.21, except that humans ('*adam*) are added as a fifth category.

Some of these categories can apparently be broken down further, but because of the limited evidence in the Bible, it is hard to be sure of the details. This survey is enough to show that the way that the Hebrew language classified living creatures was quite different from what many other languages do. One small point is that, as in many other languages, bats are included under birds (see Lev 11.13-19).

16.4.3 Semantic domains: our own language

Translators are of course working with more than one language. Many translators are working with at least three. In addition to the language of the original text, and the target language of the translation, there are likely to be one or more other languages that the translator has to work from. The examples that we have looked at so far are taken from the original language of the text. However, it is also important that translators should study the nature of semantic domains in their own language. This is necessary in order to choose the terms that will best fit each context.

As an example of this, try to think of all the words or expressions in your language for the concepts of “crying” and “laughing”. Begin by listing all the words you can think of. As an example, here are some lists from English:

cry: to cry
 to weep
 to wail
 to shed bitter tears
 to sob
 to snuffle
 to whimper
 to bawl

laugh: to laugh
 to burst out laughing
 to roar with laughter
 gales of laughter
 to giggle
 to chortle
 to guffaw
 to chuckle
 to snicker
 a person's eyes twinkle
 to smile
 to grin

The techniques for studying semantic domains are covered in more detail in another unit, and we do not need to go into great detail here. Here we will make just two points about these words that you have collected.

First, it is important to think carefully about how these words are used. What situations do they describe? What are the reasons for the laughing or the crying? What is the nature of the laughing or crying? What kind of situations might it occur in? The process of studying a semantic domain requires that we work out that language's own framework for viewing this area of meaning. What are the important categories and components in that language that distinguish one term from another?

Second, it is sometimes very useful to work backwards from a domain in your language to the Bible. Once you really understand the meaning of a particular term in your language, and how it differs from related terms, then you can try to think of places in the Bible where that term would be exactly the right one to use. One does not always think of the right term when translating a passage, but working backwards from a semantic domain to the Bible text can help to make sure that our translation makes use of the full semantic resources of our language.

For example, the REB translates Sirach 21.20 (a passage from the Deuterocanon of the Old Testament):

A fool guffaws,

But a clever man smiles quietly, if at all.

GNT in the same passage uses “roars with laughter”, rather than “guffaws”, while NRSV has the more literal, “raises his voice when he laughs”.

In 2 Samuel 13.19, REB translates, “Tamar threw ashes over her head ... and went away, sobbing as she went.” Many other translations use the more ordinary words, “crying” or “weeping”.

Similarly, REB translates Matthew 2.18, “A voice was heard in Rama, sobbing in bitter grief.”

REB uses the word “whimper” in Job 4.10: “The roar of the lion, the whimpering of his cubs, fall silent.” (REB here follows an exegesis different from other translations, so it is not possible to compare the REB wording with theirs.)

The New Living Translation is another English version which has used some of these less common English words. Here are some of the examples:

Gen 39.14: “My husband has brought this Hebrew slave here to insult us!” she sobbed.

Gen 45.2: Then he broke down and wept aloud. His sobs could be heard throughout the palace.

Psa 6.6: I am worn out from sobbing.
Every night tears drench my bed.

Heb 12.17: It was too late for repentance, even though he wept bitter tears.

But it is clear that many of the available English terms are not found in any of the versions. One wonders whether this is because there are no appropriate contexts in the Bible, or because the translators did not think of the right word when they came to a context where it might have been used?

16.4.4 Figurative language

Another important aspect of the cognitive frame of language concerns the way that speakers can use concepts that primarily refer to one thing in order to express ideas about other things. This is the use of language that we call “figurative language”. This also is discussed in another unit, so we do not need to spend a long time on it here. What we will do is to refer back to the cultural frame of domestic animals, and show how creatively one typical cultural experience of these creatures has been used to express many other concepts.

The cultural experience we will look at concerns the concept of the shepherd. We have seen how the shepherd was responsible for guiding the sheep, looking after them, and protecting them from danger. This kind of relationship made the shepherd a natural figure for leaders of various kinds.

One of the first of these figures that we meet in the Bible shows God himself as the shepherd, and the people as the sheep. When Jacob speaks to his son Joseph in Gen 48.15, he refers to God, “who has been my shepherd all my life”. This idea is developed in the well-known Psalm 23, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

Other leaders of the people are also called “shepherds”. It is referred to Joshua in Num 27.16-17 and to King David in 2 Sam 5.2. In 1 Chr 21.17, David himself prays to God not to harm the people because of what David has done wrong: “It is I who have sinned, I, the shepherd who have committed the wrong; but these poor sheep, what have they done?”

If other passages, we return again to God as the shepherd, dealing with his flock in various ways. Psalm 74.1 prays, “Oh God, why did you cast us off? Why does your anger smoke against the sheep of your pasture?” And there is the famous passage in Isaiah 40.10-11,

“See, the Lord God comes with might ...
He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.”

This important figure of speech continues to be used throughout the Bible. In Matthew 9.36, when Jesus “saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” Jesus develops this figure in great detail in John 10. And at the end of his life, Jesus applies an Old Testament passage to himself (Mat 26.31) as he speaks to his disciples: “Tonight you will all lose faith because of me; for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of his flock will be scattered.’” (REB)

In prophetic passages, the figure of the shepherd and sheep works in two ways. It can be used to condemn the current leaders for not showing proper concern for the people, while at the same time promising that God will eventually raise up a new leader who will act in the right way (Jer 3.15, 23.1-4, Zec 10.2-3). For example, Ezekiel 34.2-3 begins a long passage saying, “Ah, you shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding yourselves. Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep.” The passage goes on to condemn the current leaders in other ways, but eventually ends, “I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them” (34.23).

We will end with three different New Testament examples of the use of the shepherd figure:

“May the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, ...” (Hebrews 13.20, REB)

“I appeal to you to be shepherds of the flock that God gave you and to take care of it willingly.” (1 Peter 5.2-4, GNT)

“he will sit on his glorious throne, with all the nations gathered before him. He will separate people into two groups, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25.31-33, REB)

16.5 Interpersonal frames

There are many ways that languages express the relationships between one or more individuals. To look at this aspect of language is to look at language in terms of the interpersonal framework. Let us look at some examples of this.

16.5.1 Pronouns

Pronouns are elements of language that allow us to keep track of the main actors in a speech situation. First person pronouns are pronouns that refer to the speaker. Second person pronouns refer to the hearer or hearers. And third person pronouns refer to other people. Every language has its own way of using pronouns, and there are usually aspects of the pronoun system which are different from any other language that we might want to compare it with.

Many aspects of pronouns are discussed under another topic, and there is no need to go into detail here (see the unit on “Implicit and Explicit information”). However, it will be helpful here to mention one obvious way that pronouns reflect the relationship between the speaker and hearer (or writer and reader). In many languages, it is not immediately obvious what first or second pronouns should be used. A speaker must choose between two or more options in order to reflect the correct relationship that exists with the hearer. For example, there may be one set of pronouns which is appropriate if the speaker and hearer are close friends, but a different set of pronouns that must be used if the speaker wants to show respect to the hearer. If you use a distant pronoun when speaking to a friend, the friend may feel that you are upset. But if you use a familiar pronoun

when speaking to a person you hardly know, they may feel that you are trying to insult them. Some languages have very complicated pronoun systems which are sometimes called “honorifics”.

16.5.2 Honorifics

“Honorifics” refer to the systems of choices which languages sometimes use to place people on different levels of the social scale of the culture where the language is spoken. This subject, too, is discussed in the unit on “Implicit and Explicit information”, but we can look at it briefly here.

In some languages there are a number of different kinds of social relationships which are marked by honorifics. Ordinarily honorifics will affect the choice of pronouns. But they can also affect the choice of vocabulary. Some words should not be used when speaking to someone to whom one is showing great respect. For those people, there are other words. For example, in some of the languages of Southeast Asia (such as Thai, Khmer, Malay, and Burmese), there are (or were) different words that one should use for certain concepts depending on whether one was speaking about an ordinary person, a Buddhist monk, or a member of royalty. These differences in vocabulary could be for objects or for verbs. For example, to say that someone “walked”, one would need to know first who was doing the walking.

There is an English joke that will perhaps give a little of the flavor of this aspect of honorifics for those who are not used to it. It says that “horses sweat, men perspire, and women glow”. The joke suggests that the word “sweat” is too coarse a word to use even of men, and that one should certainly not use it when referring to women. The important thing for our purpose here is to understand that honorific systems are another important way in which languages reflect the relationships of the people who are referred to in the text.

16.5.3 Jesus

Interpersonal language choices become especially important when one is wondering what terms to use to refer to Jesus in the New Testament. In translations in many languages that have honorific systems, the decision has been made that Jesus should be treated with the highest respect in the translation. This has sometimes given the impression that even during Jesus' lifetime, he was recognized by others as a person deserving the highest respect. More recently, some people have begun to question whether it is really appropriate for our translations to give people the impression that this approach to translation gives.

If your own language has an honorific system, or something like it, it will be a good idea to stop and reflect now on how that system has been applied to Jesus in Bible translation that has been done so far in your language. Note that there are several different uses of language that could possibly be treated differently in a translation of the Gospels:

- 1) the narrative passages, where it is the Gospel writer who is referring to Jesus
- 2) dialogue, where a variety of other people may be speaking to Jesus or about him
- 3) cases where Jesus is speaking to other people

Look for example, at John 9.24-34, where the Pharisees are talking about Jesus with the blind man who had been healed by Jesus. In terms of what the Pharisees say in verse 24 and 29, it is clear that the Pharisees have a very low opinion of Jesus. But what does the translation suggest, in terms of the way the honorific system has been used? In many Indonesian translations, for example, all of the Pharisees' reference to Jesus have been written with capital letters in this passage, suggesting that they are speaking of him as God. The truth is that at this stage in the passage, even the blind man does not have a very clear understanding of who Jesus is (see 9.35-38). It might be possible to show the blind man's growing understanding of Jesus through the choice of options from the honorific system. Certainly we would expect the blind man to speak respectfully of Jesus at all times. But in verse 9.38, we might say that his eyes have been fully opened. This is shown in NRSV and many other English translations by translating the same

Greek word *kurios* as “sir” in verse 36 (where the man has still not understood who Jesus is) and as “Lord” in verse 38 (where the man says that he believes in Jesus).

For the question of how Jesus refers to himself, look at Mark 1.34-39. In this passage we see that Jesus does not want people to know who he is. In verse 34, he forbids the demons to speak, because he does not want them to make known who he is (compare 1.23-26). Yet in many languages with honorific systems, the translation has Jesus using pronouns that only God or a king might use when speaking about themselves. Indonesian versions create much the same effect by using capital letters whenever Jesus refers to himself. In terms of the honorific system of your language, is this the correct thing to do, or not?

16.5.4 Final particles

In many languages, there is a set of words which can be put at the end of a sentence to express various attitudes or points of view of the speaker. These words are often quite short and sometimes have rather distinctive tone or intonation. They are called “final particles”. They are another aspect of the interpersonal frame of language.

One thing that final particles often express is that the speaker is asking for information, in other words, asking a question. However, there may be different particles to indicate different kinds of questions:

- a true question for information
- a question asking the hearer to confirm that what the speaker has said is correct
- a question suggesting that the speaker ought to know the answer, but has forgotten it

And so on.

But final particles can express many different attitudes and emotions, and the exact meanings of final particles can be very different from one language to another. For example, a final particle may suggest something like “I find this fact very disagreeable”. Or, “You have accused me unjustly, forgetting this information I am giving you.” Or, “This is the explanation for what I have just said.” Or, “Surely you should have known this without me telling you!” Any one language has only a limited set of final particles, but when we look at many different languages, the options for what a final particle can mean seem to be endless. And because the meanings are sometimes rather precise, it can often be difficult for someone learning the language to learn to use the final particles correctly. Also, because the final particles of the translator's language may not match anything in the source language, the translator may often not think of them when translating, even though they are a very important part of the language.

Not all languages use final particles. English has very few, and many of the meanings that are given by final particles in other languages are given in English by intonation. Probably this is one of the most difficult aspects of English for a non-English speaker to learn, and it is also an aspect of English that is very difficult to write.

The English sentence, “It was John” can mean many different things, depending on the intonation used:

- “John was the one who did it.”
 - “Did you say that it was John who did it?”
 - “I can hardly believe that it was John who did it.”
 - “I do not believe that you are telling the truth when you say it was John.”
 - “John was the one who did it, not me!”
 - “I am telling you the truth, it really was John who did it.”
 - “So it turned out that John did it after all?”
- and so on

Because of the difficulty of writing this aspect of English, translations into English may lack certain important aspects of interpersonal information. However, in most cases this kind of information can be shown in other ways when it is hard to show the intended intonation of a sentence.

16.5.5 Interpersonal frames and translation

In straight narrative text, there may not be many opportunities to reflect the interpersonal frame of a language. Especially in the Bible, the narrator rarely refers to himself as “I” or to his audience as “you” (but there are exceptions, such as Luke 1.1-4, Acts 1.1, and many passages in Nehemiah, as 1.1-2). Final particles may not be appropriate to use in narrative passages. However, whenever the narrative begins to describe what the characters said using direct quotations, then we would expect the full resources of the interpersonal component of language to appear. All of the different pronoun options, the choices of the honorific system, and the different final particles will probably sound very natural and appropriate in examples of direct speech. When translating examples of direct speech, translators can sometimes make the translation come alive by thinking of their text as a drama, and thinking how a character in these circumstances, and with these motivations and attitudes, would actually say this speech most naturally in the target language.

16.6 Spiritual frames

There are many other perspectives or points of view from which the whole process of translation can be viewed. However, we will look at only one more. What are the spiritual frames that affect the work of translation?

16.6.1 Prayer

It is important that those who are involved in a translation project think of the work as primarily work they are offering to God. The pressures from different groups, the problems that may be caused by insufficient resources, the personal feelings of inadequacy, all of these can cause a translator to feel discouraged. But even if all is going well, one does not want to begin to feel that this is because we are doing everything right.

Instead, it is good if the whole community can be involved in regular prayer for the translation work. Let everyone involved in any way, even those who are only waiting for the final results, learn to see the work as God's work, and to ask for God's blessing and guidance for the translation team. And to ask for God's direction for everyone, to see how best they can contribute to the total task.

16.6.2 The Bible as a spiritual book

When doing our translation work, we must always remember the basic motive of our work. We are preparing the Scriptures for the church. The Scriptures serve many spiritual functions for the church. It is through the Scriptures that God continues to speak to the church, causing the church to be truly his people, and establishing his reign, in the sense of a community who accept God as their Father and their King.

However, within this larger perspective, there are also more specific spiritual goals that translators must keep in mind. For example, the Psalms are basically prayers or hymns for the church. They should therefore be translated in a way that they can best serve this function. When people read the Psalms, they should feel that these texts are very appropriate ways of expressing one's concerns, praise, and love to God. There are many other passages in the Bible, too, which are intended to be used as prayers and hymns. If possible, hymns should be translated so that they really can be sung. And prayers should be translated so that they really can be prayed.

16.6.3 The place of translation in the church

Translators may sometimes feel somewhat apologetic about their translation work. They are aware of the difficulties they have experienced, the hard decisions they have had to make, and the mistakes that they overlook. Compared to the original texts, the translation that they are working on may seem small and insignificant indeed.

It is worth remembering that translation is at the very center of the New Testament message. Jesus himself probably knew Greek. Perhaps his interview with Pilate was carried out in Greek, and some of the other conversations that are recorded in the New Testament might have originally

been in Greek, as well. However, we know that Jesus usually spoke in Aramaic, the ordinary language of Judea and Galilee at his time. Some of his Aramaic sentences and words are even included in the New Testament (for example, in Mark 5.41, 7.34, and 14.36). But most of the words of Jesus have not been reported to us as he originally spoke them. They were translated from Aramaic to Greek in the process of preparing them for publication.

We have already seen, as well, that the writers of the New Testament, since they were writing in Greek, often did not go back to the original Hebrew when they wanted to refer to the Old Testament. There was a Greek translation available, and they regularly referred to it, and even quoted it confidently as the word of God. Whether they were reporting Jesus words, originally in Aramaic, or the words of the Jewish Scriptures, originally in Hebrew, the New Testament writers clearly felt that there was nothing wrong in giving these to us in another language, Greek.

Throughout the history of the Christian church, this has continued to be the pattern. When the church grew beyond the bounds of the Greek-speaking world, it was immediately assumed that translations were needed in the languages that people knew. There were times when parts of the church resisted this and tried to force people to use the Bible in a language that they did not really understand. But in the full sweep of Christian history, this has been the exception. Everywhere it has been recognized that people need to hear God's message in their own languages, and translation has continued to be a vital part of the life and growth of the church.

Translators therefore should take very seriously the great importance of the work that they are doing. They should recognize that it is not simply their own work, but that this is part of the way that the Holy Spirit has worked through the church from the very beginning. They must regularly and continually entrust their work to God, asking that his Spirit guide them in all of the difficult choices that are always being made as the translation work is done.

The spiritual framework is crucial to translation.

16.7 Conclusion

We have looked at the task of Bible translation from several different perspectives or frameworks: organizational, textual, social and cultural, cognitive, interpersonal, and spiritual. Each of these provides a different way of looking at and understanding the translation process. At different times it will of course be necessary for translators to focus more on one of these frames than on others. However, all of these frames are important, and there may well be other important frameworks, as well, that affect the work of translation. When we realize that translation can be viewed from many different perspectives, it helps us to keep the larger picture in mind even when our work requires us to focus on just one of the different frameworks.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

SECTION THREE - THE TRANSLATION PROCESS

UNIT SEVENTEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#) [\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Structures and Procedures

17.1 Roles within the Translation Task

Successful translation work is a team effort. A good translation reflects the contributions of a variety of persons working in harmony to bring the translation to its fruition. Each translation team consists of several members, each with his or her role and assigned tasks. Each member of the team needs to be clear about his or her specific role and assignment within the overall project. It is also important that team members understand the specific responsibilities of other members of the team so that there is no waste of effort or possible clashes due to uncertainty about those roles and tasks.

In establishing a translation team following Bible Society guidelines it is important that the team keep in mind that its assignment is to serve all Christian churches and all speakers of the particular language. It should therefore have wide representation to take account of the needs of all speakers of the language. It should contain women as well as men and be a group that has the support and respect of the local churches and communities. Where the team is small and it is not possible to have active involvement of every community group or denomination, it should nevertheless be a team that all in the community respect.

Before undertaking any translation thorough research has to be done to identify the needs of the community for whom the translation is being proposed. This specific audience should be well defined and its special characteristics known. This research is done so that the translation can address the expressed needs of an audience. In some cases the church requesting the translation knows its audience well enough that no further research may be required. However this may need to be validated with some further research. Translators will then keep this audience and its characteristics in mind as they work through the translation.

Given that there is a wide variety within the projects being done under Bible Society auspices, the following list of assignments may not all be found in every project. Nevertheless all the roles and responsibilities listed do need to be filled. If the team is a relatively small one then several roles may be filled by one member of the team. Some projects may have one translator and several reviewers, while others have a full range of persons assisting the project, all of them working full-time on the project. The structure of the project depends on the specific needs of that individual project. However, all of the various tasks listed below need to be attended to by the project team whether large or small.

Translator(s). The primary drafting task is assigned to the translator(s). Some teams have only one part-time or full-time translator; others have several translators. It is a Bible Society requirement that the translator be a native speaker of the language into which the translation is being done. Those who are not native speakers may assist in various ways, but ultimately the native speaker is the one who must determine what is natural in the target language. It is the translator who decides which of the various translation options sounds best and fits best with the context. For this reason translators are required to have a wide-ranging ability to use all the resources of their mother tongue.

Translators also need to have a good knowledge of the language from which they are translating. Ideally, translation should only be undertaken where there are translators who can make full use of the various exegetical and technical tools that are now available.

It is very helpful if translators keep notes about exegetical and translation decisions made so that when reviewers ask about a specific choice made in translation, the translator can explain the reason for the form or wording used.

Where there is more than one translator working on the project, the division of work should be on the basis of whole books. Single books should not be divided between several drafters. The reason for this is to ensure that whole books do not vary in style as a result of the personal styles of the various translators. It is true that each Bible book demonstrates its own style and this should be true also in a translation.

Researcher. Investigating and determining the needs of those for whom the translation is intended is the task of the researcher. It is important at the outset of a project to define the intended audience, the type of translation required (formal, liturgical, Study edition, children's Bible etc.), the level of language appropriate to the audience, the dialect to be used etc. No translation should be undertaken without this basic research having been done since it may turn out that the finished product is not acceptable because it fails to address the needs of the audience. Also included in this research can be the decision about certain key terms to be used – the name for God, for example, or other sensitive matters in the case of denominational, regional or other concerns.

In some cases this research is done by the local Bible Society in consultation with the translation team. In some projects an initial consultation between the BS Translation staff and the church is the means for establishing the requirements of the audience. In smaller language groups the local church may be quite clear about the audience without further systematic research being undertaken. However, regardless of who does the audience research to define their needs, no project should be undertaken without this task first being completed.

Exegete. An acceptable translation is dependent upon an adequate understanding of the biblical text. The exegetical task should be carried out by a person with good theological training and where possible a good working knowledge of the biblical languages. The exegete should have access to the best of scholarly exegesis as reflected in the UBS Handbooks and other commentaries.

It may well be that the translator(s) are able to do this exegetical work themselves without outside help. However, if this is not the case and a special exegete is assigned to the project, that person should work very closely with the translator to ensure that the Bible text is properly understood. In some cases, before translation of the passage is attempted, the exegete may provide an analysis of the passage to be worked on. Often exegetical help is given after the text has been drafted and in the context of a checking procedure where the exegete works closely through the draft with the translator.

The TC is ultimately responsible to assure the exegetical correctness of the translation.

Reviewers. The role of the reviewers is a very important one in the project. A team of reviewers is required. Even in a small translation team where there might be only one translator, the review team should include wide representation from the community and consist of a number of members. Ideally the review team should have within it some who have expertise in their own language and some who are well able to judge the correctness of the exegesis and rendering of the meaning. The reviewer is also to check for naturalness in the expression used by the translator.

There are often two kinds of reviewers in projects: the one is fully integrated into the team and participates in regular review sessions with the translator(s) and the TC; the other kind of reviewer is a little more distant and is sent copies of drafts for possible comment. Often these latter are heads of churches or other responsible persons with a strong interest in the project. However people chosen primarily for their status often have little time available to actually comment on draft translations.

Occasionally reviewers may meet as a group to discuss specific issues and come to a consensus about them.

The reviewers' task is not retranslating the work unless the draft is incorrect or not understandable, or worse still likely to bring about a misunderstanding. Reviewers should avoid criticizing the draft simply because they think their own personal renderings are to be preferred. It is possible to express meaning in a wide variety of ways and so if the translator has chosen a particular way to express a meaning, reviewers should accept that rendering unless there is a justifiable reason for rejecting it. It is important that reviewers clearly understand the principles upon which the translation is based.

In some projects the identity of the reviewer(s) is not revealed to the members of the translation team otherwise the translator may respond to their comments on the basis of the identity of the reviewer rather than on the worth of their comment.

Stylist. The stylist's role is to ensure that the translation displays a good and effective use of the language as generally accepted by the intended audience. The role may be fulfilled by one or more of the reviewers. Where there is a language with a long literary tradition and the help of a stylist will enhance the project, such a person can be appointed to the team. Often this is a person who has editorial skills and knows how best to communicate at the level required by the translation. However the stylist should not try to make all the books stylistically consistent with each other since each Bible book has its own peculiar literary style.

Any changes proposed by the stylist need to be checked exegetically to ensure that meaning has not been changed.

A stylist can be invited to go through the entire MS at the completion of the translation to ensure that there is overall linguistic consistency. The completed Bible should have a consistency of language level, register, sentence pattern and other features (appropriate to the specific texts) that meet the criteria established for the intended audience.

Translation Consultant. The TC is assigned to the project to provide expert advice and training, make available resources, monitor progress and assure quality. At the conclusion of the project that TC "signs off" on the project for the Bible Society confirming the quality of the work and giving assurance that the translation meets Bible Society standards in all respects. Without this the national Bible Society should not publish.

Prior to the commencement of translation and following research done, the TC conducts the first of many training workshops. In the first workshop potential translators who have been suggested by their churches are given basic training in Translation Principles and given exercises in translating specific passages. The purpose here is to evaluate their potential as translators. On the basis of this first workshop recommendations will be made to the Bible Society and churches as to possible translators and reviewers. During the course of the project follow-up workshops on specific issues are held. In the Asia-Pacific region we are recommending that in the first 2 years of a project 8 weeks of training be held. Additional workshops may be required as the project progresses. The TC is responsible for all training, even if on occasion he or she calls in other Consultants to assist. The assistance of another TC with computer skills may be required for training in the use of computer tools.

In order to check the accuracy of the translation the TC will meet regularly with the translators and reviewers. The amount of time available for this varies with the project and with the workload of the TC. However, in the early stages of the translation it is vital that close monitoring of the work be done. This is because translation is a skill as well as a gift and so translators will need to develop their skills over time. Also there are many basic questions and issues that require discussion and decision in the early days of a project so as to avoid problems further into the project. The TC is therefore required to have a major input into this discussion as the project gets underway. As it progresses and the translators and reviewers hone their skills, the amount of contact time is usually lessened. However, the team should feel free to call on the TC at any time for advice. This can often be done through email or other forms of contact if a personal visit is not possible.

The TC is not expected to check every verse of a Bible translation but to so train the translation team that they grow in their ability to work independently to produce a translation that meets UBS standards. More checking will be required in the early stage of a project and then hopefully it will decrease.

Books and other resources of a technical nature can be provided by the TC. A basic library should be provided including UBS handbooks and dictionaries; commentaries are loaned as required. A computer and computer resources should be provided for all projects. Ensuring that translators are trained in their use is also part of the TC assignment.

Bible Society Manager (Publishing Process Manager). Administrative responsibilities for a project reside with the PPManger. This person has the responsibility of ensuring the smooth progress of the project from its inception through to its publication and release. This is an administrative role only that will not necessarily be filled by a person with translation skills. The PPM role does not involve input into the technical translation decisions the team makes. Responsibility for ensuring salary and other agreed payments are made to translators in a timely way, based on the agreed progress of the work, falls to this person. Monitoring the progress of the project to ensure that the work is completed on time and within budget is also important.

The appointment of a Bible Society PPM will only apply in the case of projects fully under BS control, something which may not be true of all projects with which a TC is involved. The important thing about this role is to ensure that every project is completed in the most efficient way to get the Scriptures into people's hands as soon as possible.

Church Translation Committees (Literature Boards). There are many translation projects that are proposed by individual churches or a group of churches with formally organized Translation Committees or Literature Boards. In some situations this committee has had a long history of concern for a variety of translation tasks in their language and often has taken the lead in language research.

If this kind of committee exists in the local language community, it will often be the agency that determines the orthography to be used and other important matters relating to that language. The Bible Society through its PPManger should work closely with this group and listen to their advice. In the final analysis this committee will bear the responsibility for the acceptance or otherwise of the translation since it provides much of the advice about terms to be used and other factors that influence the translation's acceptability by the churches. This committee also usually is the one to suggest potential candidates as reviewers and translators since they are the ones who know the skills available within the community.

However, it is advisable to carefully consider persons nominated by this committee to attend a translation workshop and to serve as potential translators since the one(s) nominated may be proposed for reasons other than their ability or suitability as translators.

Secretary/Coordinator. Some translation teams have a member whose sole responsibility it is to act as administrator or coordinator for the team. In other cases a translator fulfils this role as well. The task assigned here is that of sending drafts to reviewers and receiving back their comments, contacting members of the team when there is a meeting to be held, contacting the TC and advising the best time for checking sessions or other meetings, arranging the place and time for such meetings, sending copies of drafts to the Bible Society PPManager and so on. In some cases the Secretary also has some financial responsibilities, receiving money from the PPManager and distributing it to participants for travel costs as well as making payments if costs are involved in holding meetings. The Secretary liaises with the PPM on behalf of the team.

Keyboarder. Keyboarding of translated text is a vital role in any translation project. Not only typing skills are required of this person but training in the specific requirements for keying in Bible text with the necessary Standard Format Code markers. The various electronic checks to ensure that the MS is complete are also the responsibility of the keyboarder. The electronic MS should always be backed up and copies kept in at least two separate locations for safety. The Keyboarder needs also to keep records to ensure that translators and reviewers are working from the latest corrected copy. Archiving of the final MS should also be arranged.

Keyboarding begins the moment there is draft material to be entered. From this earliest stage material should be sent to the CAP office to ensure that there are no problems such as the requirements for typing special symbols etc. There are many special typesetting requirements in some languages, such as special characters, that the CAP office needs to know about so that it can offer advice about how to go about identifying them and keying them in. Many unnecessary problems can be avoided when the keyboarder alerts CAP about the language's special requirements from the outset. As well, CAP can identify potential problems to be avoided. It is important for the keyboarder to master SF codes from the beginning of the project. Whether keyboarding is done directly by the translator or by someone else, the task and responsibilities are the same.

Where a translation team does not have access to a computer, special arrangements will need to be made.

NBS's that do not have their own internal CAP service should make contact with the CAP center that serves their needs as soon as there is material keyboarded and provide them with keyed-in material for their reference.

Proofreader. Proofreading plays a vital role in ensuring that the published MS is free of typographical errors. Proofreading is a skill that not all translators or stylists have. It is very important to the finished product's quality that a good proofreader read the entire MS several times to ensure that it is correct in all details. While we do have computer-based spell checks and other software that make this task easier, there is always the possibility of error since the computer can only detect words spelled incorrectly; it cannot tell whether the word is incorrect in its context. For example, the computer will not know whether the correct word in a specific context should be "through" when it is typed as "though", or "their" when it is typed as "there." Only the proofreader will detect that mistake.

Proofreaders must not make changes of a translation or stylistic nature; any changes proposed by the Proofreader should be approved by the Translator.

17.2 Translation Procedures: Setting Up a Translation Project

Setting up a new translation or the revision of an old version, and taking over a translation which is already up and running are important responsibilities of the UBS Translation Officer. The following sections provides checklists of the major elements in this process.

Under the Publishing Process Management (PPM) approach, translation projects from their inception need to be closely coordinated with all other elements and personnel involved in the publishing process. This will allow the translation team to achieve the goal of a quality translation which can be published and placed in the hands of the intended audience in the most timely and efficient manner. It is important that issues to do with the final stages of the process, and in particular publication and distribution, should be considered right from the beginning.

17.3 Pre-Translation Procedures

17.3.1 Research

Although the TC may not be directly involved in this preliminary research, it is important that research be done before any project is begun. The research may be done by the local church or by the organization proposing the translation. The local BS may also be asked to assist in this.

- ☐ The Bible Society responds to the request for a translation coming from a local church or language group. It does not initiate projects, though it may suggest the possibility of a translation to a local community.
- ☐ A consultation with the local church to establish the project is often important.
- ☐ The BS needs to make clear its commitment to the project and the nature and extent of that support
- ☐ The project must establish the target community profile
- ☐ Ascertain the type of translation required (formal or common language; revision of an old version; children's Bible; study Bible etc.)
- ☐ The BS and the local church will research potential funding sources, both actual and possible
- ☐ Ascertain the availability and qualifications of possible translators/reviewers - considering their biblical knowledge, original language skills, mother tongue facility, standing within local church and community
- ☐ Determine the nature of church support - does it have inter-denominational and/or inter-confessional support? financial support? prayer support? leadership and lay support?
- ☐ Research the orthography and other linguistic issues, including dialectal differences.
- ☐ Ascertain whether any special orthographic characters or typesetting features are required for keyboarding and discuss these with CAP staff.
- ☐ In an interconfessional project, recognize that there may be differences in traditional terminology and proper nouns (names of people and biblical books, for example) and establish a mechanism to deal with them.
- ☐ For revisions of old versions it is important to determine what needs revising and the reasons for such revision.
- ☐ For Study Bibles, agree on the method to be followed - adaptation of an existing model or development of a completely new one?
- ☐ Clarify the target audience's requirements as to the kinds of information they want included
- ☐ For a Children's "Bible", determine whether it requires a new translation; establish the age group of the audience. What material needs to be included? How much material to include? Illustrations - how many should there be? What art style is required? How much will the artwork cost?
- ☐ Artist (if required) - is his or her work suitable for a Children's "Bible"? Does he/she understand the story?

If after research it is determined that there is sufficient need for and interest in the project, that the local language community and BS are able and willing to give full support to the project, then the decision can be made to proceed with it. If all optimal conditions cannot be met there may be the need for further research or a decision to delay the start or even not to proceed with the project.

If the project is to go ahead, the next step is training.

17.3.2 Training

The TC's primary role within any project is that of training the translators and reviewers so that they can work independently and produce a translation that meets the highest of Bible Society standards for faithfulness and accuracy.

- ☐ The TC sets up an initial training workshop (preferably of two weeks duration) to introduce UBS Translation and Exegetical Principles. Those attending this workshop are persons nominated by their local church or language group as possible candidates for the role of translator and reviewer.
- ☐ As a result of the workshop the TC will suggest to the church or organization those who show real promise as translators and reviewers and request their appointment. However, in reality, many times the church has already determined the people it wants as the translator(s). This may require sensitive discussion and negotiation.
- ☐ The TC will explain the UBS ethos as a non-sectarian and inter-confessional organization.
- ☐ Exegetical principles, Linguistics, and Translation Principles will be taught at a basic level to give potential translators an understanding of what translation is, and what it is not.
- ☐ Other invitees include the artist for Children's Bible, NBS General Secretary, Marketing and PPM officer so that all have an understanding of the principles on which the translation is based.
- ☐ In choosing the translator(s) the TC will seek a balanced representation of men and women.
- ☐ The following factors play into the decision about the ideal translators - Are they team players? Are they open to other denominations or church traditions and their full participation in the project? Do they have a suitable personality for sustained work? Are the reviewers heavily committed to other work so that they have little time for completing review assignments on time? Do all have a good facility with their native language?
- ☐ At the workshop translators will be oriented to the specific needs of the audience defined and how to meet those needs.
- ☐ Translators hopefully begin to gain awareness of grammatical features of their own language
- ☐ Clarify the role and function of the TC and of each member of the team so that whole team understands the specific roles and responsibilities of the others.
- ☐ A computer orientation workshop will usually be necessary (to involve translators, TC and/or keyboarder, and to be held as soon as practicable after the project begins). The purpose is to look at the "pilot" translation coming from the initial training workshop in order to identify potential problems, peculiarities of the language and the CAP requirements necessary for serving the project adequately. Also to check font size - some older people require a larger font size. Teach SF codes and CAP tools to keyboarder (who may or may not be the translator)

17.3.3 Local Bible Society

- ☐ National BS to appoint administrative manager (PPM) for project - this may be the BS General Secretary.

- ☐ Clarify the role of the PPManger vis-à-vis the TO/TC to ensure there is no overlap or conflict in roles and functions.
- ☐ Determine the source of funds - are they available from the local church, the national BS or UBS?
- ☐ Appointment of the translation team and reviewers by NBS in consultation with the TC and local church community based on performance at training workshop
- ☐ A clear understanding with the translators must be in place setting out the roles and relationships to be observed for the efficient organization of the project. This is especially important if there are other organizations such as SIL involved.
- ☐ Agree to translators' service conditions -salary/vacation/incentives/working hours, all should be set in accordance with local working conditions in Bible Society or church.
- ☐ Draw up a clear contract with translators and reviewers setting out service conditions, and clear guidelines for expected progress through the project, including monthly reporting.
- ☐ A signed and legal contract between the translator and the publisher indicating that **the translator relinquishes all rights to the translation in perpetuity.**
- ☐ Appointment of artist for Children's Bible or selection of model illustrations. The artist needs to become familiar with the text and with the role of illustrations within the product - they are to support and be consistent with the text. Perhaps the TC will need to prepare scenarios for the artist.
- ☐ Set up a translation office - its location may be in the translator's community or be provided by a local church or elsewhere as appropriate;
- ☐ Provide a basic library kit and other tools, a computer meeting specifications (this latter may also be provided by the church or language community). The **Library Kit** should include an English Dictionary (the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary?), a basic Bible Dictionary (Lion?), a 1 volume Bible commentary (Harper's or IVF), UBS Handbooks including the Flora and Fauna Handbooks, Bibles in the national language as well as in the original languages if the translators are able to use them.
- ☐ An audio or video translation will need to arrange for the use of studio space and time etc.
- ☐ Establish a possible and ideal time-line from beginning translation through to publishing.
- ☐ Church relations – ensure a sense of ownership of the project by the local church.

17.4 Translation Procedures

- ☐ Set time line (with an ideal team of 2 full-time translators - 4 years for NT, 8 years for OT) to include monthly progress expected of the translator. Progress will be slower initially until the translator becomes more experienced. Note that there are budget implications in varying this time-line.
- ☐ Establish the order in which books are to be translated (based partly on the relative translation difficulty - prose before poetry, gospels before epistles- as well as church priorities)
- ☐ Make a list of suggestions for key terms in the new translation. Consider the rendering of the divine name; sensitive terms; inclusive language; religious terms in the context of other religions. If it is an interconfessional translation, establish a procedure for dealing with different traditions in representing proper nouns
- ☐ Agree to monthly reporting of work completed to TC and PPManger and the form in which they should be sent.
- ☐ Submit keyboarded text to CAP on a regular basis
- ☐ Set the timing of and procedures for

- (i) TC checking visits - include procedures for sending back-translations (where possible) prior to the TC's visit.
- (ii) The review process and clarify the function of reviewers.
- (iii) Stylistic review,
- (iv) Reviewing illustrations for Children's Bible,
- (v) Checking audio/video script for faithfulness
(NB - Email "visits" can reduce the number of trips required)
- ☐ TC sends reports following visits to projects to the translators, RETCO and GS. The report consists of a report of progress as well as a record of translation decisions made
- ☐ Arrange on-going training in the use of all CAP and checking tools within Paratext.
- ☐ It is important at the beginning of the project to make decisions about supplementary materials such as Book introductions, illustrations, maps, footnotes, glossary etc. for standard Bible translations as well as for Study Bibles. Work on these early to avoid delays due to typesetting complications and in some cases obtaining copyright approvals.
- ☐ Arrange follow-up workshops to deal with specific issues - e.g. poetry, figurative language, rhetorical and literary features of the original languages etc.
- ☐ Ensure that updated copies of all MS are sent regularly to the BS office and that a copy of the latest version is stored safely in a place other than the translator's work space. This procedure ensures that in the event of loss there is always a current copy of the translated text in safe keeping.
- ☐ Discuss typesetting/CAP/format questions arising from trial printouts of the translation
- ☐ In the case of hand-written manuscripts - the TC may need to orient the translator to the layout appearance of a typeset manuscript.
- ☐ If a stylist is to be part of the translation team, check any changes he/she makes for possible exegetical changes inadvertently brought in.
- ☐ Orient the translator/reviewer to proofreading and editing of the typeset text. Final proofreading should be done by a trained proofreader and not the translator
- ☐ It is important that there be procedures set up for adequately publicizing the new translation and giving progress reports to churches. This will require the PPM to work closely with the marketing dept. to ensure it is fully aware of the features and value of the new product.
- ☐ Examples of the new translation must be publicized in the church and the community news media from the moment they become available.
- ☐ Publication of trial editions of completed portions
- ☐ Testing of audio and video "drafts" for feedback and audience response
- ☐ Feedback from trial editions by language community and church regarding format, font size etc. but primarily concerning the translation itself
- ☐ Final corrected and proofread text or product is signed off by TC. NBS sends approved text for processing/typesetting.

17.5 Post-Translation Procedures: Evaluating the Product

- ☐ Final check of proofs (typeset corrected text) including all illustrations and graphics
- ☐ Careful check of the CRC before shipping to printer
- ☐ Printing and shipping of printed Bible are arranged – (allow 6 months from date of shipment of CRC)
- ☐ Production of the audio or video product (time allowance?)

- ☐ Set the launch date only after sending CRC for printing
- ☐ Launch the Bible in a way that gives it the greatest exposure in the church and society
- ☐ Obtain feedback from the users regarding the translation and any suggested corrections for future printings or revision
- ☐ Document all the feedback received and ensure it is kept available for later revisions
- ☐ Archiving of the final electronic text

A first translation is just that, the first in a continuing line of revisions and new translations. Changes, revisions and modifications will be required to enable the product to continue to meet the specific needs of audiences in a changing world.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT EIGHTEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

Revising Older Translations

18.1 Introduction

Many people who become Bible translators will be working on new translations, but by no means all of them. A reasonable number of Bible translation projects are revisions of translations that have already been published. It is important for all translators to understand the principles of translation, so for the most part, people working on revisions will need to have the same background and training as other translators. Nevertheless, there are some points that apply particularly to translators working on a revision.

Usually it is not the translators who have made a decision that a revision is needed. The revision has perhaps been requested by the churches which mainly used the old translation. Or, sometimes, it may have been requested by other churches who would be willing to use the old translation if certain changes were made. Alternatively, the revision may have been something decided on by the Bible Society in the country where the language is spoken. In all of these situations, we assume that the basic situation is the same. People are essentially happy with the old translation. They are not requesting that the old translation be forgotten and replaced by a completely new translation. However, they feel that there are some areas in which the old translation has problems of various kinds. Therefore, they would prefer to use a revised translation which still has the good features of the old translation, but where the problems have been corrected.

18.1.1 Understand and follow the principles of the revision

In this kind of situation, it is very important that everyone who is interested in using the revised translation should agree on just what changes they want the translators to make. Principles should be drawn up making clear what changes are expected and what changes are not expected. The translators need to understand these principles thoroughly and to follow them with great care.

18.1.2 Principles may need to be revised

Following the principles does not necessarily mean that they cannot be changed. It is important during the process of a revision to produce sample material of what is being done. This will allow the people interested in the revision to look carefully at the results of the work, and to decide if it is really what they want or not. After sample material has been reviewed, there may be a need to revise the principles of the revision. At this stage, if the translators have noticed areas that they feel are problems, they can also have input into the discussion.

However, at any stage of the work, it is nevertheless important that translators must follow the principles that are guiding the revision at that particular time.

18.2 Various types of revision

There are several different types of revision projects that translators may become involved in. Four of the main types are discussed here.

18.2.1 New Testaments which are being incorporated into Bibles

Ordinarily a new translation of the Bible will begin with the New Testament. In many cases this New Testament is published and in use for a number of years before the Old Testament is ready for publication. At this point there may be a number of reasons for revising the New Testament before the full Bible is published in this language. Some of these reasons might be:

a) During the work on the Old Testament, the translation team may have gained new insights into translation techniques, and they want to apply these now to the New Testament.

b) They may have a better understanding of aspects of their language than they had when working on the New Testament.

c) They may have decided to use different expressions for certain key terms than the terms that were used in the New Testament.

d) There may have been various comments that people have made regarding the New Testament that need to be considered.

e) Places where the New Testament quotes or alludes to the Old Testament need to be checked, to be sure that the text in the New Testament reflects the Old Testament text as much as it should.

For all these reasons, it may be agreed that the New Testament should be revised, so as to be more of a unity with the Old Testament when the complete Bible is published.

18.2.2 Updating versions in regular use

As a translation is used over the years, people may discover various problems in it. From time to time it is good to review all the comments that have been received, and to look for any mistakes that may have slipped through when the translation was first published (or at the last time the translation was updated). This type of work does not normally take a long time and will probably not change the nature of the translation in any significant way. After it is published, readers may hardly be aware that the Bibles now being sold are different from the ones that have been in use for some time. It is perhaps misleading to call these kind of changes "revision". It is more a matter of making necessary corrections to the text in places where problems have been discovered.

18.2.3 Adaptations of the text for particular purposes

Often if a Bible aimed at children is wanted, a text will be prepared especially for that purpose. However, occasionally a decision is made to adapt a text already in use so that it is more appropriate for children. This kind of project (whether aimed at children or some other audience) has the same nature as any revision. Careful principles must be worked out so that the translators working on the project have a clear understanding of exactly what is expected of them. They need to know what things should be left the same as in the original text and what kinds of things they are expected to change.

18.2.4 Major revisions of older translations

Probably the most significant kind of revision involves a major revision of a translation that has been in use for some time and which readers are already quite familiar with. If a decision has been made to do this kind of revision, it should imply the two points already made:

- People basically like the translation, so there are many aspects of it that they do not want to see changed.
- Nevertheless, it is widely agreed that there are some problems which do need to be dealt with.

It is precisely in a situation of this kind that it is appropriate to do a revision rather than a new translation. If the project has been set up with a full awareness of what the expectations are, then this kind of revision can be successful. Nevertheless, it should be clear that this is a situation that people may have strong feelings about. This is the reason that everyone should agree on what the revision is intended to accomplish before the work begins. And this is of course the reason why it is so important that the translators carefully follow the principles that have been agreed on.

18.3 What aspects of a translation may be revised?

In a typical revision, there are likely to be certain kinds of changes which are being made. It may be useful to look at examples of these. Since the New Revised Standard Version is a revision of the earlier Revised Standard Version, and both of these versions are still in use, it is convenient to take many of our examples from the NRSV.

18.3.1 Words that are no longer in use or understood

English did not change drastically in the less than 40 years between the publication of the RSV and the NRSV. In principle, there should not have been any archaic words in the RSV that needed to be dealt with. However, the RSV was itself a revision of older versions, and in fact some

outdated words were still found in it. Therefore, one of the changes made by the NRSV was to change old-fashioned English for current English.

Some examples:

Gen 15.13:

RSV: "Know of a surety that ..."

NRSV: "Know this for certain, that ..."

"Know of a surety" was certainly archaic even when RSV was translated.

Mat 5.13:

RSV: if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltness be restored?

NRSV: if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?

In American English, there is no such word as "saltness", so NRSV has changed it to the ordinary word, "saltiness". However, it is possible that "saltness" still sounds normal in British English, because it is used in the Revised English Bible.

Acts 6.1:

RSV: the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews

NRSV: the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews

Although "murmur" is still in use in modern English, it is not used in the meaning of "complain".

Php 2.1:

RSV: So if there is any ... participation in the Spirit

NRSV: If then there is any ... sharing in the Spirit

Similarly, "participation" would not be used in this way in modern English.

18.3.2 Cases where the original translation was too literal

This situation refers to cases where the translators of the base translation followed too literally the wording of the source language. As a result, the wording was unnatural in the target language, and it is agreed that the revision should replace the unnatural expression with a more natural one.

Gen 3.22:

RSV: and now, lest he put forth his hand and take ...

NRSV: and now, he might reach out his hand and take ...

Here, both "lest" and "put forth his hand" are unnatural in English.

Gen 18.2:

RSV: He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men ...

NRSV: He looked up and saw three men ...

Gen 22.5:

RSV: I and the lad will go yonder ...

NRSV: the boy and I will go over there ...

In addition to the other differences here, note that in correct English a person must say "I" after naming the other person, not before.

Matt 5.2:

RSV: And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

NRSV: Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

The expression "opened his mouth" in this context simply refers to the fact that he began to speak. But it is not the natural way to express this idea in English.

18.3.3 Errors in translation

A published version may have a number of misprints, also known as typographical errors (or typos). These are cases where the text does not read the word that was intended by the original translators, but a mistake somehow crept into the text when it was being published. It should be obvious that any errors of this kind should be corrected as soon as they can be, without waiting for a revision.

However, there are also cases where for one reason or another the translators themselves have made some kind of error. If any mistakes of this kind have been discovered, they need to be corrected when a revision is made.

It may be difficult to discover this type of problem in the RSV, although there could well be some. However, an example from another project can be given. Translators in one language were relying heavily on an English translation. At one point they saw the word "resin" in the English text and they did not recognize this word. They assumed that it was the English word "raisin", and they therefore used a word in their own language which had that meaning. This mistaken understanding by the translators led them to introduce a word into the translation which did not belong in that verse.

However, there is another kind of error in translation that unfortunately is easy to find in the RSV, and in this case it has usually not been corrected in the NRSV. Some may not consider these to be "errors" but rather "translation choices". But since they almost always result in a wrong meaning being communicated, they can, at least on that ground, be counted as "errors in translation". There are certain expressions that seem to have become accepted ways of expressing ideas in English Bible translations, even though the meaning that most English speakers will understand from the expression is wrong. In a sense, the problem is a matter of the translation being too literal. However, the situation is more complicated than that. It is not just that the translators have been too literal, but that the translators themselves may somehow think that the normal English sense is the correct one, even though it is wrong.

There are two common errors of this type that are made by many English translations. The first involves the use of the expression "in the temple", as in Matthew 21.14:

RSV: And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them.

NRSV: And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he cured them.

The problem with this wording is that when people read or hear "in the temple" over and over again, they begin to imagine that these things were actually taking place in the central building of the temple, the sanctuary itself. But Jesus himself was not allowed to go into the sanctuary, much less the blind and the lame. What the Greek here means is not "in the temple building", but "within the temple grounds", or "in the temple courtyards". CEV, GNT, NLT, and REB also say "in the temple" here. Better translation models are found in other translations:

NAB: The blind and the lame approached him in the temple area, and he cured them.

NIV: The blind and the lame came to him at the temple, and he healed them.

A second common translation error involves a failure to recognize that the way that the people of Israel counted units of time was different from English counting. When counting days or years, they started counting with the first day or year, whereas in English we count full days. In English, if we say that something lasted three days, it means that it lasted from the first day until the fourth day. As a result of this difference, it is often the case that the number given in the Hebrew or Greek is one unit higher than what it should be in English. Here is an example, from John 20.25:

RSV: Eight days later the disciples were together again, and

NRSV: A week later his disciples were again in the house, and

The NRSV is correct here, but unfortunately the problem has not been corrected in other places. For example, the law of circumcision was that a baby boy was to be circumcised on the eighth day, which means, according to English thinking, ‘a week after birth’. Thus, a baby to be circumcised is one week, or seven days old, even if the Hebrew or Greek says “eight days”. So in Luke 2.21, both RSV and NRSV are wrong:

RSV: Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised,

NRSV: After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child;

Better translation models in this case are:

GNT: A week later, when the time came for the baby to be circumcised

NIV: On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him

Note that “the eighth day” in English works out to have the same meaning as “seven days later” or “one week later”.

We see another example of this kind of translation error in 1 Kings 15.25-28:

RSV: ²⁵ Nadab son of Jeroboam began to rule over Israel in the second year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Israel two years. ²⁶ But he did what was evil in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his father, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit. ²⁷ Then Baasha son of Ahijah, from the tribe of Issachar, plotted against Nadab and assassinated him while he and the Israelite army were laying siege to the Philistine town of Gibbethon. ²⁸ Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of King Asa's reign in Judah, and he became the next king of Israel.

According to verse 25, Nadab began to reign in the second year of the reign of King Asa of Judah, and he reigned for two years. If one does the calculations suggested by this verse, then his reign must have ended sometime during the fourth year of King Asa. But what does verse 28 tell us? He was killed in the third year of King Asa! The reason for this problem is exactly what we have already seen when counting days. The Hebrew way of counting was this: Nadab's first year was King Asa's second year and Nadab's second year was King Asa's third year. Thus, he was king of Israel for (at least part of) two years. But it is an error to say in English that “he reigned for two years”. It is quite possible that his reign may have lasted less than one year. If he became king in the eighth month of King Asa's second year, then the time from the eighth month to the twelfth month was his “first year” as king. His “second year” as king began in the first month of the following year, and even if he was killed in the third month (which according to the English way of thinking would mean that he had been king approximately seven months only), the Hebrews would still report that he was king for two years. None of the standard English versions seem to have the wording correct in verse 25.

Perhaps the most serious counting error is found when referring to Jesus' resurrection. Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday, and by Sunday morning he had already been raised. How many days was he then in the tomb? By our usual way of calculating he was in the tomb about one and a half days at the most. But if we count Friday as the first day, and Saturday as the second day, then it is correct to say that he was raised on the third day, Sunday. It is not correct to say that he was raised “three days later”. Fortunately, this error is not found in either the RSV or the NRSV, but it does occur in some English translations. For example, the CEV and GNT both have “three days later” in Luke 24.7, 24.46, Acts 10.40 and 1 Corinthians 15.4, where the text should say “on the third day”. NLT also has “three days later” in Acts 10.40.

These two problems, concerning the expression “in the temple” and concerning the way of counting days and years, are common translation errors. They are worth mentioning here not only because they are good examples of the kinds of errors that a translation may have, but also

because anyone doing a revision should check and see whether these errors are also found in the version that they are revising. If they are, they should be corrected as part of the revision project.

18.3.4 Issues of the correct textual reading

Since the time of the publication of the RSV, there have been major developments in textual matters, especially in the Old Testament, because of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and for other reasons. It is therefore not surprising that there have been changes in the NRSV related to this.

One of the most dramatic of these changes is found at the end of 1 Samuel 10. It is actually the beginning of the incident reported in 1 Samuel 11. Here there is a whole paragraph which was found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, and which is also known from a book by the Jewish general and historian, Josephus. In this case, the NRSV may be the only version to include these words (no verse numbers are used, since none of this has been considered a part of the Bible before):

"Now Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had been grievously oppressing the Gadites and the Reubenites. He would gouge out the right eye of each of them and would not grant Israel a deliverer. No one was left of the Israelites across the Jordan whose right eye Nahash, king of the Ammonites, had not gouged out. But there were seven thousand men who had escaped from the Ammonites and had entered Jabesh-gilead. About a month later, ..."

At this point the story continues with 11.1, "Nahash the Ammonite went up and besieged Jabesh-gilead."

There are a number of other examples where NRSV has followed the Dead Sea Scrolls. Here are three examples from the book of Isaiah:

Isa 9.17:

RSV: Therefore the Lord does not rejoice over their young men

NRSV: That is why the Lord did not have pity on their young people

Isa 37.28:

RSV: I know your sitting down

NRSV: I know your rising up and your sitting down

Isa 41.25:

RSV: he has come, from the rising of the sun, and he shall call on my name

NRSV: he has come, from the rising of the sun he was summoned by name

18.3.5 Exegetical issues

There may be cases where it is felt that the original translation made a mistake in exegesis.

Exegesis is of course a somewhat debatable area, and it may be that the people planning to use the revision do not want a lot of changes in this area. This is an area in which the principles of the project will have to give clear guidance to the translators working on the revision. Nevertheless, one would assume that in most cases, if it is agreed that something really is an error, then it would be best to correct it.

Gen 11.1:

RSV: Now the whole earth had one language and few words.

NRSV: Now the whole earth had one language and the same words.

Gen 16.12:

RSV: he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen."

NRSV: he shall live at odds with all his kin."

It is not very clear what the RSV is intended to mean here; but NRSV has made quite clear what their exegesis is.

Gen 24.63:

RSV: Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening;

NRSV: Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field;

The meaning of the Hebrew word here is not clear, but NRSV has obviously interpreted it differently from RSV.

18.3.6 Inclusive language

One major change that has taken place in English since the time of the RSV is the awareness of issues of inclusive language. There are many times when Hebrew and Greek use terms which might be literally translated to suggest that they only refer to men, but in fact they refer to both men and women. One of the major points of the NRSV revision was to try to correct this aspect of the RSV. Here are some of the ways in which it was done.

Psa 1.1:

RSV: Blessed is the man who walks not ...

NRSV: Happy are those who do not follow ...

Frequently an easy way to avoid the problem in English is to change a singular ("the man") to a plural ("those").

Mat 5.16:

RSV: Let your light so shine before men, that they ...

NRSV: let your light shine before others, so that they ...

Mat 5.22:

RSV: every one who is angry with his brother ...

NRSV: if you are angry with a brother or sister ...

18.3.7 Matters of spelling and use of language

This was not a significant issue in the NRSV, so there are no examples of importance from that project. However, this can be very important in cases where there has been a major spelling reform in the language. If this reform is not too controversial, then one of the guidelines of the project may be to change the spelling of the translation to follow the language's new spelling rules. This kind of change would ordinarily be a straightforward one that could largely be carried out by computer.

18.3.8 Adding reader's helps

Many older translations did not include reader's helps, whereas these have become quite popular today. Thus, we see that the NRSV has added section headings, which the RSV did not have. In other projects, there may be decisions to add introductions to the books, illustrations, and other kinds of reader's helps.

The RSV did have some footnotes, but NRSV has added others to help explain the text. For example, in Gen 4.25, the NRSV has added a footnote saying, "The verb in Hebrew resembles the word for Seth", in order to help explain Eve's reason for giving this name to her child.

For these helps to be as effective as possible, they should be part of the assignment of the translators. For example, in the case of section headings, it is relatively simple for translators to make the decision where sections headings should be added and how they should be worded. Even in the case of illustrations, translators are the ones best able to point out the places in the text where illustrations would most effectively contribute to a full understanding of the meaning.

Finally, it may be a useful exercise to compare a passage of the RSV with the NRSV, to see the kind of changes that have been made. In the following passage, Mark 6.14-29, locate the places where changes have been made, and identify if possible what motivation was behind the change.

Revised Standard Version**New Revised Standard Version**

	The Death of John the Baptist
¹⁴ King Herod heard of it; for Jesus' ^t name had become known. Some ^u said, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷ For Herod had sent and seized John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; because he had married her. ¹⁸ For John said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him safe. When he heard him, he was much perplexed; and yet he heard him gladly. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and the leading men of Galilee. ²² For when Herodias' daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will grant it." ²³ And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴ And she went out, and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵ And she came in immediately with haste to the king, and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ And the king was exceedingly sorry;	¹⁴ King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' ^c name had become known. Some were ^d saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵ But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶ But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." ¹⁷ For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod ^e had married her. ¹⁸ For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹ And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰ for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed;^f and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹ But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²² When his daughter Herodias ^g came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." ²³ And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴ She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵ Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶ The king was deeply grieved;

but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. ²⁷ And immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard and gave orders to bring his head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸ and brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.	yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷ Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's ^h head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸ brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹ When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.
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Notes for RSV:

t (6.14) Jesus': Gk his

u (6.14) Some: Other ancient authorities read 'He'

Notes for NRSV:

c (6.14) Jesus': Gk his

d (6.14) Some were: Other ancient authorities read 'He was'

e (6.17) Herod: Gk he

f (6.20) he was greatly perplexed: Other ancient authorities read 'He did many things'

g (6.22) his daughter Herodias: Other ancient authorities read 'the daughter of Herodias herself'

h (6.27) John's: Gk his

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

UNIT NINETEEN

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

The Use of Computers in Translation

19.1 Introduction

The use of computers has changed the way in which translation work is done. Although there are still many places in the world where computers are either not available or there is no battery or electric power sufficient to allow them to be used, nevertheless many translation projects these days are fully computerized. UBS programmers have developed PARATEXT (currently version 6 SP2) as the main software tool for translators and translation officers, and an important part of the CAP officer's armoury. Paratext permits the translator to have available on screen a number of Bible texts in Greek and Hebrew as well as in other major languages, together with all the UBS Handbooks that are currently in electronic form, and to analyze the Hebrew and Greek text and access dictionaries, using the associated tools of Analusis and Vocabula. The translator can enter the newly translated text in parallel with the source texts, view it formatted or un-formatted, search their text, make wordlists, run a large number of consistency checks, and produce formatted printouts of drafts for checking. Many of the checks built into Paratext have grown from earlier stand-alone checks developed by SIL, and their inclusion in Paratext has been the result of partnership with SIL programmers.

The details of Paratext are too numerous to mention here, and it is the policy of the Asia-Pacific region of UBS that adequate training must be planned for whenever Paratext is installed for a team. This article is **not** adequate for that training, but it is worth highlighting in brief a number of distinct aspects of the translation task in which computer use is invaluable.

19.2 Keying in translated text

Although there are still many projects in our region in which hand-written translation is done, or in which typewriters are used, many are now using computers to key in, that is to type up, translated text. The text is typed into the computer and stored in an electronic format. From this multiple copies can be printed out and circulated to the reviewers. Changes and corrections can be quickly and easily made without retyping the entire document. Even where electric power is not available there are a number of options such as the use of solar-cells to charge lead-acid batteries which in turn charge a laptop computer and drive a light printer, or the use of "intelligent keyboards" such as the Alphasmart 3000, which run on AA batteries, to input text which can later be transferred to a computer.

Text is typed into the computer in accordance with certain code markers, called Standard Format Markers (SFMs). These identify the features of a text such as chapter and verse, paragraphs, section headings, footnotes, illustrations, and many more important features of a printed Bible. Use of SFMs also means that decisions about what the final product looks like can be made at any stage in the process, and these formatting decision are then applied consistently to the entire text because of the presence of the appropriate SFMs. The same text can also be used to generate different products in different formats, simply by instructing the typesetting software to interpret the SFMs with different styles.

Drafts can be keyed in to any text-processing software and then imported into Paratext, or they can be directly keyed into a Paratext window. This latter path is highly recommended, especially if translators are able to key in their own text, as they can directly access the various versions and handbooks as they proceed.

Translators should note that electronic copies of the keyed-in drafts should be stored carefully in a location away from the translator's own work place, and a further copy stored at the Bible Society

office and/or with the TC working with the project. This ensures that in the event of computer breakdown or other difficulties, there is always a copy of the most recent draft available. Translators should always record on the draft the date of their latest updating and where necessary mark any changes made (this can be done automatically by the computer).

19.3 Checking for content and consistency

Paratext provides the ability to perform a large number of different types of checks on the text, some of which were previously done by separate programs. It is important that training be given in when and how these checks should be performed. Some of the main areas of use are as follows:

19.3.1 Word lists and spelling checks

Paratext can create a word list from a text at any stage, and this list can then be checked for obvious spelling errors. A corrected list can then become the basis for checking the spelling of a text. The Paratext word list function can indicate the location of every occurrence of a word so mistakes can be easily found and corrected. This is also effectively a concordance of the translated text. Paratext's "search and replace" function allows global changes to be made where necessary, although this should be done with the utmost caution since it may change more than was required to change

19.3.2 Format marker checks

Paratext allows the translator to check the consistency of the use of standard format markers in a translated text, or to compare the use with that in a standard text and produce a list of places where they do not agree.

19.3.4 Completeness checks

Paratext enables the translator to check that every verse is present in each translated chapter. The software can identify a missing verse or a verse that appears twice, or uncover other similar inconsistencies in the draft. Another of Paratext's checking tools allows you to look for verses that are unusually short (where text may have been omitted) or unusually long (where something may have been entered twice).

19.3.5 Punctuation checks

Paratext can check that capital letters are used consistently, that quotation marks and brackets are correctly paired and can identify unusual combinations of punctuation marks.

19.3.6 Key-words, names and parallel passages

The Checklist tool within Paratext has numerous functions. There are lists of keywords (currently only for the NT), distinguishing different meanings based on the usage in the original languages, but listed in English, which allow translators to check every verse in their translated text where these words should occur, in parallel with selected standard texts, and to approve particular translation renderings, or to approve a verse with no explicit rendering. Other lists enable the same to be done with both Old Testament and New Testament names. Another function allows comparison of gospel (and other) parallel passages, displaying both the translated text and selected standard texts for the different parallel passages side by side.

19.4 Text management

Paratext makes a number of important functions relatively straightforward:

19.4.1 Back-up, restore and file transfer

Creating compressed back-up files of a translated text is made easy in Paratext, and the program will also prompt the user to make back-ups if they have not been done for 7 days. Restoring texts from the compressed files is similarly straightforward and this process of Back-up and Restore also provides a quick and reliable way of transferring text files from one computer to another.

19.4.2 Printing

Although texts can be printed directly from Paratext, this is still not a highly refined function. But Paratext 6 allows texts to be prepared for draft printing, by the creation of output files in either RTF (or XML) format. These can be further formatted (e.g. double spaced) in order to produce draft printouts for reviewers.

19.4.3 Storing and comparing drafts

It is important that the translated text can be saved as a “draft” at certain relatively stable points in its development, such as the draft which the team has agreed on to send out to reviewers. These form points of reference and comparison for future revision and development and while work on the text goes on, the team can always revert to these or identify the changes that have been made since the draft was saved. Paratext enable both the saving of a text as a stable “draft” and the comparison of two texts, highlighting changes that have been made.

19.5 Correspondence and Email

Word processing software allows for typing and printing (and storing) of correspondence. Since there is generally a lot of correspondence between the translator and other members of the translation team, church authorities, consultants, Bible Society representatives etc. this is an important service the computer makes possible. Electronic forms of correspondence by e-mail or by the use of messenger and chat services are quick, efficient and generally less costly than other forms of correspondence. Frequent communication between members of the team, and between the team and the TC or the NBS should be encouraged.

In particular, files can be sent electronically to all members of the team, and especially to TC's involved. This enables the TC to examine the MS before visiting the project, and in some cases means that the TC does not have to visit so often. Questions can be raised and answers received quickly and back-translations can be sent back and forth. TO's are able to prepare for visits and make the visit more effective if he/she has been able to work through the draft prior to meeting with the committee.

19.6 Exegetical tools

A number of exegetical tools are now available to the translation team in electronic format, either on CD-ROM or on the Internet, including Bible dictionaries and handbooks, commentaries on biblical books, Bible texts in original languages and in translation and many more. However, some guidance should be given if the team members do not have adequate theological training. Because the amount of material now available is vast, the value of it for Bible Society translators is sometimes questionable. Not everything available on CD-ROM or the Internet is of equal value; it may be available because the group or person able to make it available considers it worthy, or it is no longer under copyright and therefore free to the public. These are not necessarily good reasons for it being preserved. Translators may need help to discern what material they should rely upon for guidance.

19.7 Electronic text and publishing

One of the great advantages of having the Bible text in electronic format is that the typesetting and publication of the text becomes much simpler provided that the keying-in has been done properly according to standards set. Not only is the task simpler it is also quicker and more efficient. Paratext provides the possibility to export text in a format that is acceptable by some typesetting software packages. The same text can also be used to produce a large variety of products: Bibles in a variety of sizes and formats – double column, single column, large type, study editions, pocket editions, portions and selections, Braille versions, all can be generated from the one electronic text. For Bible publishers this is perhaps the most important feature of having the text available in the computer.

19.8 Revising Older Translations

Since all languages change with time, the revision of older translations is an ongoing task. This has been true of all Bible versions. Having the Bible text available electronically means that revisions of any translation can be done more efficiently and speedily. Changes can be made only at those places where change is necessary without having to retype the entire MS. For older Bibles, published before the days of electronic text, there are several ways of producing an electronic text – either by scanning (and careful proof-reading) or by re-typing (and careful proof-reading) – which can then form the basis of ongoing revision.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

SECTION SIX – PRACTICE PASSAGES

Practice Passage One

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Introduction

The Book of Ruth is set in the time of Israel's Judges. During this period, as we see in the book of Judges, there was constant enmity between Moab and Judah. However this book implies happy relations between the two nations.

The book speaks of an Israelite family being forced to flee to Moab because of famine in the land of Judah. The family consists of Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their two sons. The sons marry local Moabite women. The book traces a series of tragedies that befall the family so that in the end all that is left is Naomi and her daughters-in-law. When Naomi decides to return home to Judah she suggests the daughters-in-law stay behind in their own land in the hope they may remarry. Out of love for her mother-in-law Ruth refuses to abandon Naomi, a widow, and so travels with her back to Bethlehem.

The main part of the book deals with the relationship between Ruth and Naomi and the plan to find a new husband for Ruth among the kinsmen of her late husband. Boaz, a kinsman, marries Ruth and the final scene tells of the blessing pronounced upon Naomi by the other women following the birth of Ruth's son.

The book is a narrative work with two brief poetic notes in 1.16-17 and 20-21.

As for the plot structure, it is a quite straightforward narrative. Chapter 1 sets the scene, describing the reason for the family's going to Moab. It follows that description through to the point where Ruth and Naomi have returned to Bethlehem. In Chapter 2 we are introduced to Boaz as a rich kinsman of Naomi's. Naomi arranges for Ruth to harvest in his field and a meeting takes place. Naomi's further plan is revealed in Chapter 3 when she suggests that Ruth visit Boaz during the night. At this point we learn that there is a kinsman who has more right to "act as next-of-kin" than does Boaz. However, Boaz promises to be her next-of-kin should this closer relative not wish to exercise that privilege. The final chapter, Chapter 4, resolves the question of who would be the next-of-kin to Ruth when the other relative decides that he does not wish to serve that role. Boaz and Ruth are married and a son is soon born to them. Its final climax is the genealogy in which Ruth and Boaz's son is listed as a forebear of King David.

Translation

The following notes may serve as reminders to TC's of some of the translational issues that arise in this book. The treatment of each verse may not be exhaustive but during the course of a workshop in which translation practice is based on this book, many basic issues in translation can be covered.

To save space and time, the NRSV text on which these practice notes are based will not be included. TCs and translators will be expected to have a copy to hand.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 *In the days when the judges ruled* refers to the period in Israel's history between Joshua and Saul. *Judges* were essentially leaders of local tribal areas; they were not legal professionals in

the modern sense. It is important to recall that this was a period in Israel's history when Moab was often at war with Judah. This makes the story of Naomi and the family all the more unusual.

Bethlehem in Judah. Translating or transliterating geographical names can be an issue in translation, so it needs to be discussed here. *Moab* lay to the east of Judah at the north-eastern end of the Dead Sea.

To live renders a Hebrew verb meaning "to live for a time," or "to live as a foreigner."

1.2 Names of individual people can be a problem in translation, just as geographical names can be. Here is a list of 4 people. *Ephrathites* means that although they lived in Bethlehem, they were from the district of Ephrathah.

1.3-5 Elimelech, Naomi's husband died; her two sons then married local Moabite women.

1.6 Naomi decided to return to Judah because she had heard *that the Lord had considered his people and given them food*. The verb *considered* is literally "visit with some purpose," perhaps to punish or to bless (as TEV). We could even say, "he showed his concern for...and provided food." The famine was now at an end.

1.7 *They went on their way to go back...* is a typical Hebrew expression involving verbs of movement. The sense is that "they set off to return to Bethlehem."

1.8 *Go back...to your mother's house.* It is possible that the fathers of the two daughters-in-law were dead and so they were advised to return to their mothers. *May the Lord deal kindly with you* expresses Naomi's wish for the two women. *As you have dealt with the dead and with me* indicates that the two women had been very kind to Naomi, to their father-in-law, as well as to their husbands. The point is to show that these two Moabite wives had been loving towards all members of the family.

1.9 A further wish that Yahweh would bless them with remarriage. Widows in many ancient societies were often taken advantage of (see laws requiring special care for widows, orphans and the poor in Deut 24.19-22). *Security* is actually "a place of rest," hence RSV says "find a home."

1.11-12 One other reason Naomi suggests they go back to their families is that she cannot have other sons to replace their husbands. *Daughters* - throughout this book when Naomi addresses her daughters-in-law with a vocative, she uses the term "daughter." Presumably this is a term of endearment.

1.13 The two rhetorical questions here expect the answer "No."
It has been far more bitter for me than for you. The Hebrew text states clearly that Naomi has suffered more than they have. TEV understands this to mean that Naomi feels bitter about what has happened to the women. This interpretation seems difficult to justify.
The hand of the Lord has turned against me expresses Naomi's view of events. The loss of her husband as well as of her two sons is something that Yahweh has brought about.

1.14 *They lifted up their voices and wept* is RSV's literal rendering. NRSV's "Then they wept aloud again" gives the meaning better. They *wept again* - see verse 9.
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law implies that she kissed her as a farewell gesture. This was a cultural practice used between men as well as across gender lines. The emphasis is on the farewelling rather than on the particular form of the kiss. Orpah had decided to return to her home. Ruth, on the other hand, *clung to her*. The verb *cling* here carries two meanings - she both held on to her mother-in-law; she had also decided to remain with her and not return home.

1.15 *Gone back to her people and to her gods.* Orpah went back to *her people*, meaning either back to her own family or to her own Moabite tribe. She also was returning to *her gods*, to her traditional religion. The author does not comment on this religious aspect, so it is not very helpful to ask about whether Orpah worshiped Yahweh for a time but now was going back to her traditional faith. On the surface it seems as though this is what happened in Orpah's case. It is possible that this is a phrase that summarizes her return home. However, it may reflect a situation in which gods were thought to belong in given territories, so by returning to her Moabite roots she was also returning to worship the local gods.

In verses 16-17 we have Ruth's response in a poetic form (NRSV). Translators will need some orientation to Hebrew poetry. However, as poetry is not a prominent feature of the book, only a general overview may be required if this is being translated in a preliminary workshop. Here we will see parallelism and repetition as its main features. It concludes with an oath or promise.

1.16 *Do not press me to leave you* means "do not beg me to leave you" or "do not force me to leave you." The verb *leave* is a strong verb meaning "forsake" or "abandon." The second line implies the same main verb but adds a parallel clause, *or to turn back from following you*. *Where you go, I will go* - sets the pattern for the next five statements. The set of five statements is very emphatic and strongly asserts Ruth's decision never to leave Naomi. *Where you lodge, I will lodge*. The verb *lodge* refers to staying somewhere for a relatively short time rather than permanently.

In contrast to Orpah who was returning to her own tribal gods, Ruth says she will adopt Naomi's God as her God.

It is important to retain the form of the Hebrew text in this verse partly because of the poetic structure but also because of the emphasis that it gives.

1.17 *May the Lord do thus and so to me and more as well if...* These words form the introduction to an oath in which a person solemnly swears to do something. In translation it may not be very meaningful to use these words literally. The person making the vow or promise invites Yahweh to punish them and punish them severely if they fail to keep the promise made. TEV has "May the Lord's worst punishment come upon me if..." *...if even death parts me from you*. This sounds rather extreme and so is a kind of hyperbole or exaggeration. Death will obviously part them. But Ruth emphasizes the promise she is making to Naomi by stating that not even death will separate them.

1.18 *And when Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more.* The verb *saw* has the sense of grasping or understanding rather than visual sight. The verb phrase *she was determined* renders a Hebrew verb that means "to strengthen oneself" and so we can say, "she had really made up her mind to..." or "she was resolved to..." *She said no more* probably does not mean that Naomi did not speak to Ruth again. Rather, Naomi could see that there was no point trying to persuade Ruth to remain behind, so she spoke no further about that matter. She closed the subject.

1.19 No details of the journey are given though it was a reasonably long and difficult one, crossing the Jordan River and making their way up the hills from Jericho through the wilderness. The author simply tells us that they set off and eventually reached Bethlehem. *Bethlehem* - see note on verse 1.

The whole town was stirred because of them. The arrival of Naomi and Ruth together caused a great excitement within the town. The *town* refers to the people in the town. The phrase *because of them* can also be translated "on account of them" or "over them," meaning that everyone was excited at their arrival. It was obviously an unexpected event. Additionally, Ruth was a foreigner from the traditional enemy territory of Moab. This would be another factor in the townspeople's reaction.

The women said, "Is this Naomi?" is literally "and they (fem. plural) said..." The context would suggest that this was something the women said to one another rather than to Naomi. It is an expression of surprise and joy. Naomi had left Bethlehem many years before and moved with her husband to Moab. The townspeople did not expect to see her again. CEV translates as "Can this really be Naomi?" This is a rhetorical question.

1.20 *She said to them, "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara...harshly with me."* This statement of Naomi's uses a play-on-words. The name *Naomi* comes from the word meaning something like "lovely" or "pleasant." Naomi then says to the women of Bethlehem, "Don't use the name "Naomi" or "Lovely one" but instead use another name, "Mara." The name *Mara* comes from the word "bitter." Naomi has returned home without husband or sons, so her life in Moab was for her a very bitter experience. It is unlikely that Naomi wants to change her name to Mara; rather it is her way of emphasizing that although she has come home to Bethlehem, her life over the past years was a bitter one. That bitter experience probably caused her to look older and worn, a fact that could also account for the women asking whether in fact it was Naomi.

For the Almighty has dealt harshly with me. Ruth explains the change of name to Mara as due to the way *the Almighty* has treated her. The title *the Almighty* is a reference to Yahweh, Israel's God. However, it uses an ancient title (Shaddai), the name known to Abraham (Gen 17.1; Exo 6.3). It is used often in Job, but in Ruth occurs only in this and the next verses. Its origin is not known and its specific meaning is uncertain. The LXX translates as *pantokrator*, the one who is all-powerful. Translators will need to consider how to render the divine name and titles.

1.21 We now have Naomi's explanation for her accusation that Yahweh has caused her bitterness. She says, *I went away full, and the Lord has brought me back empty.* Departing Bethlehem *full* refers to the fact that she, her husband and their two sons left together. They were a relatively complete family unit. She has now returned as a childless widow - *empty*. This time she uses the divine name "Yahweh" (Lord).

Why call me Naomi, when the Lord has afflicted me...? She feels that the name "Naomi" is not appropriate to describe her present situation. She again states that it is Yahweh who has brought this bitterness upon her. Attributing such disaster to Yahweh is a view that we can find in other parts of the OT - e.g. Amos 3.6. God, the all-powerful, causes everything to happen, both what seems good and that which seems bad.

He has *afflicted* or brought trouble upon, her. The Hebrew verb here is ambiguous - it can mean "afflict" as well as "answer" or "respond." This is the reason NRSV gives a footnote indicating the other meaning "testified against me." It seems more likely that the meaning placed in the text is the correct or intended one.

The Almighty has brought calamity upon me. This statement is parallel to the previous one. It is the third time such an idea has been expressed in these two verses, indicating how important it is. The use of parallel lines is typical of Hebrew poetry. The parallel statement serves as a way of emphasizing the point she is trying to make. Her life has become bitter and it is God who has caused it to be so. Translators can think of ways their languages express emphasis - a double expression like the one here may not be appropriate in all languages.

1.22 This verse completes verses 6-7 that told of Naomi's and Ruth's setting out on the journey home to Bethlehem.

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess her daughter-in-law with her. The introductory *So* represents the Hebrew connecting particle. It marks this verse as a conclusion to the story, but it also introduces the important theme of the barley harvest that features in the following chapter. A particle that functions as an introductory element should be used in translation.

There are many references to Ruth as *the Moabitess*. This seems to be a deliberate emphasis upon the fact that Ruth is not an Israelite. That is made even stronger by the addition of the further description that they had come back from Moab.

And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest. This time phrase sets the scene for the next part of the story. Its function is important for that reason. The verb *came* to can be rendered as "they arrived in..." *Barley* is a grain crop - it may be unknown to some language groups. TC's can here discuss the generic-specific issue.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter introduces the other main character in this family drama, namely Boaz. Naomi plays a relatively minor role from here on. The chapter consists of an introduction (verse 1), followed by two scenes. In the first scene, Ruth gathers left-over grain in a field that belongs to Boaz (verses 2-16); in the second she shares with Naomi an account of the day's happenings (verses 17-23).

2.1 *Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side...* The introductory *Now* marks a new direction in the story. Hebrew uses the marker "and" or "but" in many contexts. Here it serves to introduce the change in scene. Translators can be made aware of how their language achieves this effect. The noun *kinsman* means a close relative. This relative is described as being *on her husband's side*, which is to say a relative of her husband's. Many languages have specific terms for these kinds of relationships.

A prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. The introduction of Boaz into the story is completed with this statement that tells that he was a rich and prominent person. He was also *of the family of Elimelech*. Elimelech was Naomi's husband, so this phrase adds further information to the preceding one about the identity of Boaz and his close relationship with Naomi by marriage. He is described as *a prominent rich man* is literally "a strong man," "a mighty man of valor." The phrase describes someone who is influential and wealthy. CEV calls him a "rich and important man."

2.2 The scene changes with Ruth suggesting that she go and gather food. There is no background given to this suggestion of Ruth's - were they in need of food? Was it Ruth's way of identifying with the others in the village? How long had they been in Bethlehem before this suggestion was made? Many questions arise but we cannot begin to answer them.

Ruth is again identified as *the Moabitess* stressing that she is a foreigner.

"Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain..." The Hebrew verb with which this begins is a cohortative with the suffix implying a request for permission to do something. "May I go..." or even "Would it be right for me to go..." are ways to give its sense. Although the noun *field* is singular it probably has a collective sense and can be best rendered in English as a plural - "into the fields." It probably does not refer to a specific field, although the reference to Boaz in the introduction to this scene might lead listeners to wonder whether it was Boaz's field that she intended to visit.

Glean describes the practice of following the harvesters and picking up the stalks and grain left behind by them. People were allowed to gather up the gleanings - in fact there were laws requiring harvesters to leave some behind for the poor and others in the community to gather up (Lev. 19.9-10; 23.22; Deut 24.21). The *ears* of grain is a technical use of the word "ear."

Behind someone in whose sight I might find favor. This clause implies that the one gleaning followed behind one of the reapers. It seems that the reaper needed to agree to the gleaner following him or her and picking up what was left. *In whose sight I might find favor* refers to

receiving permission from someone, or being treated kindly by them. It is a common Hebrew idiom. See also this phrase in verses 10 and 13. Ruth hopes that someone will be kind to her and allow her to gather up what the harvester leaves.

She said to her, "Go my daughter." The two pronouns *she* and *her* need to be clarified, but the context makes it certain that *she* refers to Naomi and *her* refers to Ruth. TC's can draw attention to the challenge of identifying pronoun references. *Daughter* does not mean Ruth is Naomi's actual daughter. It may well be the case that when speaking directly to a daughter-in-law, it is appropriate to address her as "Daughter." So in some languages it might be best to use the specific term for daughter-in-law used in verse 6, or an idiomatic term of endearment.

2.3 *So she went* clearly refers to Ruth setting off to glean in the fields. The introductory *So* marks Ruth's response to gaining permission to go. We can say, "Ruth set off."

She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. The Hebrew text uses the verb *came* to note Ruth's arrival in the fields, but in many languages this kind of redundancy may not be required.

As it happened... This renders a Hebrew idiom that uses the compound of verb and subject noun from the same root. The root carries the sense of fate or chance happening - "It just so happened that..."

She came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. The narrator does not suggest that Ruth knew that this was Boaz's field and so went there, but the reader would not be surprised at this turn of events. This could be anticipated from the introduction in verse 1.

2.4 *Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem.* NRSV has *Just then...*; TEV has "Some time later..." The Hebrew text is literally "And behold Boaz came..." There is no specific time reference in this phrase, but NRSV translators have tried to convey some sense of the coincidental nature of these events. This seems to be the more important aspect of the use of the Hebrew particle "Behold!" On the other hand, from verse 7 we know that Boaz arrived several hours after Ruth had begun gleaning in that field. It also reminds that the fields were some distance from the village of Bethlehem.

He said to the reapers, "The Lord be with you." This is a phrase of greeting. It seems to have a heavy religious content, more so than the more traditional "Peace!" The content of the phrase *be with you* and the phrase *bless you* may well be close. Yahweh's presence is one that gives blessing. TCs can discuss here the principle of cultural adaptation. Here the specific theological content of the phrase raises it above the ordinary greeting that would be expected in most similar circumstances. For that reason it would seem inappropriate to translate here with a sort of "Hi there!" greeting.

They answered, "The Lord bless you." The religious greeting meets with a religious response from the reapers. In both cases, the speakers are wishing Yahweh's blessing on the other party.

2.5 *Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?"* This literal rendering of Boaz's question may sound inappropriate in some modern contexts, but it stems from a background in which a woman was seen as some man's possession. So to ask who she belongs to is appropriate in that setting. However, it could also simply be a more general question about her family relationships. It may appear unusual that Boaz would not have known about or even met Ruth before since she had come to live in the village with one of Boaz's relatives. However, the narrator does not raise that kind of issue. Rather, the narrator uses this as a way of introducing the two main actors in this scene to one another.

2.6 The man in charge of the reapers answers Boaz's question and identifies Ruth specifically.

2.7 He then tells Boaz of Ruth's request for permission to glean in that field. *She said* introduces Ruth's request and so the Hebrew general verb *said* can be rendered "asked" or "requested." TCs can deal with the limited Hebrew vocabulary for speech or what we can call its preference for this general verb "say."

Sheaves are stalks of grain that have been harvested and bound together in bundles. Some commentators think that it is highly unlikely that Ruth would have asked for the right to *gather among the sheaves*, that is among the grain that had already been harvested, since the right to glean only applied to stalks of grain that had been left behind, not those gathered into bundles, and what Ruth is asking for is a privilege that even the local poor were not allowed. It is possible that the correct translation suggest that Ruth was asking to glean and gather her own stalks into bundle. TEV and CEV both avoid this difficulty. CEV: "She asked if she could pick up grain left by the harvest workers."

So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment. This sentence is a difficult one for exegetes though the Hebrew text itself seems not too difficult. It says literally, "and she came and she stood since this morning until now and she sits (in) the house a little." The question of interpretation revolves partly around the verb "sit" or "rest." There is also a question about the meaning of the final word "little" perhaps suggesting that her resting is "a small matter." The NRSV rendering is a common one implying that Ruth has worked diligently all day to that point and hasn't even taken time to rest. The other interpretation is that she has been on her feet all morning and the fact that she is now sitting down is a small thing, not an indication that she is lazy.

This verse gives an example of an exegetical problem when the Hebrew text is relatively clear in the sense that each word can be identified. The problem rests with the meaning to be conveyed. TCs can discuss with translators the issues involved for translation in this situation. The use of footnotes that show the reader that there is an interpretational dispute here; which view should go in the text and which in the footnote. (Here CEV has a footnote that suggests it is offering "one possible meaning for the difficult Hebrew text." Such a footnote is misleading - the Hebrew text itself is not the problem; its interpretation is).

2.8 With this verse we have the first known meeting between Boaz and Ruth; the two main characters in the scene and in the story as a whole are now on stage.

"Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one." With this change in speaker comes the need to mark this change of direction. NRSV has used *Now listen* as the way to do this. The Hebrew uses the multifunctional conjunction "and/but" for this task but it also has used a question form - "and have you not heard...?" This is a rhetorical question expecting the answer "Yes " or "No" depending on the translator's language usage (Some languages use "Yes" to respond negatively to a negative question; others will use "No" with the same meaning.) We can render the sense here as "Haven't you been told ... that...?" to which Ruth's response would presumably be "No, I haven't been told..." or "Yes, (you are right) I haven't been told..." See also the negative question in verse 9. In both these examples the question form is used to emphasize a fact.

My daughter when used by Boaz carries a meaning different from the term when used by Naomi. Translators need to consider what term is appropriate in the context of a distant male relative addressing a younger female.

The command Boaz gives is a double one - that Ruth not go elsewhere to glean nor leave this particular field. The sense of both is similar and so these are parallel commands.

But keep close to my young women. Boaz offers advice rather than a command. He tells Ruth she would do best if she kept close to the other young women gleaning there. Presumably this is a socio-cultural matter in that it is not wise for a young woman to be in the field far from other young women. This appears so from the note in the following verse in which the young men are a source of potential trouble for her. Boaz's concern for Ruth's welfare begins to show at this point. It anticipates a growing relationship between them. The phrase *my young women* should not be rendered in a way that suggests that they were anything other than female servants who gleaned in Boaz's fields.

2.9 *Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them.* Boaz tells Ruth to watch carefully where the women are working, following behind the men who are doing the reaping. The phrase *Keep your eyes...* calls Ruth to watch carefully. The passive form *is being reaped* can be expressed as an active form by identifying the men as the reapers - "watch closely in which field the men are reaping and follow the young women..."

I have ordered the young men not to bother you. The Hebrew text uses a rhetorical question here: "Have I not ordered...?" RQ's can serve as emphatic statements, as NRSV has done here. The *young men* refers to the men who are reaping the harvest for Boaz. *Bother* is perhaps a euphemism since the Hebrew verb used is literally "touch." RSV used "molest."

If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn. The initial *If* can also be expressed as a temporal marker, "when." The noun *vessel* refers to the containers of water. They were probably water bottles made from animal skins, or pottery jars. The English expression for fetching water from a well is to "draw" water. Boaz's reapers have brought water to the fields for when they are thirsty, Boaz gives Ruth permission to drink the water they have brought. Such permission was probably necessary before Ruth could presume to drink.

2.10 *Then she fell prostrate, with her face to the ground,* tells of Ruth's reaction to Boaz's kindness and concern for her welfare. Literally "she fell on her face," indicates not some accidental fall but a customary way of showing gratitude. The following verb is closely related to this action. She literally "worshipped to the ground." Both clauses describe Ruth bowing low or perhaps kneeling on the ground and touching the ground with her forehead.

And said to him, "Why have I found favor in your sight...?" Ruth asks Boaz how it is possible that he should look with favor on her. The question is a real question, as Ruth asks for information or an explanation. To *find favor* in someone's sight indicates that the person is receiving generous and favorable treatment. We can say, "Why are you being so kind to me?"

That you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner? Ruth's surprise is that she is being treated kindly even though she is a foreigner. Moabites were not expecting to be treated kindly by Israelites - one reason for this is given in Deut 23.3-6. To *take notice of* or to recognise represents a neat play-on-words in Hebrew since the root *nkr* has this meaning, as well as being the root for the noun "foreigner." *When* in the phrase *when I am a foreigner* is not an adverb of time. It is best rendered as "since" or "because," this being the function of the Hebrew conjunction.

2.11 *But Boaz answered her, "All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told to me.* Although this chapter states that this was the first meeting between Boaz and Ruth, nevertheless this statement tells us that Boaz had a special interest in Ruth and already knew much about her. Her kindness to Naomi was known to him. The verse opens in Hebrew with a double verb *huggedh huggadh* - this gives the sense of something "told at length" or "told fully."

And how you left your father and mother in your native land. The first thing Boaz mentions is the fact that Ruth abandoned her family home to be with Naomi. The *native land* is literally "the land of your birth."

And came to a people that you did not know before. Ruth had returned with Naomi to Bethlehem, to a people not her own (1.10). They are described as people *that you did not know before* expressing the fact that this was the first time that Ruth had lived among the Israelites. The verb *know* is basically a word of relationship rather than just knowing about something.

2.12 *May the Lord reward you for your deeds.* Boaz expresses a wish in the form of a blessing. He calls upon Yahweh to *reward* her, using the verb *shalam* that speaks of completeness and a person's welfare. The *deeds* refers to the kindness Ruth showed for Naomi.

And may you have a full reward from the Lord, the God of Israel. Here Boaz adds further emphasis to his prayer for Ruth. He wishes her a *full reward*, using a verb *skr*, to reward, then adding the noun *shalemah*. This double expression provides the emphasis intended. The definition of Yahweh as *the God of Israel* can be understood as Boaz's wish to draw attention to the link between Yahweh and Israel for the benefit of this foreign woman.

Under whose wings you have come for refuge. Whether Ruth saw her coming to Bethlehem in these terms is perhaps unlikely. Boaz uses a traditional Israelite way of referring to Yahweh's protection of his people (see Psa 17.8; 36.7 for examples).

2.13 *Then she said, "May I continue to find favor in your sight, my lord.* Ruth hopes to retain Boaz's favorable treatment. She addresses him as *my lord*, a term of respect for a master.

For you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant. Ruth uses a term of self-deprecation, calling herself a *servant*. The term describes a maid-servant. It is not the word for a slave but can on occasion be used for a concubine. It is thought that the word here is merely deprecatory, (though in light of what happens later, perhaps there is a double sense?).

Even though I am not one of your servants. The Hebrew text could suggest that there is some kind of a play-on-words here also since it reads literally, "and I am not like one of your maid-servants." The same word for "servants" is used in both this clause and the previous one. Ruth is happy to be treated as one of Boaz's servants even though she is not one, is the sense.

2.14 *Mealtime* is a general word, here probably referring to the mid-day meal. Boaz invites Ruth to join him and to share in his food. *Bread* is a specific term but also serves as the general word for food, something to eat. *Bread* implies a loaf that was probably flat and round and made of wheat flour.

Dip your morsel in the sour wine. The *morsel* is a term not used very often in modern English. It refers to a small piece of something. Here it probably describes the small piece of bread Ruth takes from the larger loaf. She is told to dip it into the *sour wine*, which can also be called "vinegar." Because of the way the sour wine is being used, TEV suggests "sauce."

Ruth took her seat with Boaz and the men who were reaping. Boaz gave her *some parched grain*, a common food in that part of the world. *Parched* usually means "dried," and here may mean "roasted" or cooked in some manner. The verb used in this clause is a rare term and its meaning is not known. "Heap up" is not a good rendering. The UBS Handbook suggests "pass" as with TEV.

2.15 Boaz instructs his reapers to permit Ruth glean *even among the standing sheaves*. On *sheaves* see 2.7. Normally gleaners could pick up the heads of grain left behind by the women who gathered the cut stalks together into sheaves, or bundles. Ruth is permitted to gather from where the sheaves were standing. NRSV suggests that the sheaves are "standing" while TEV has them "lying." The Hebrew text does not make clear which is correct though normally the sheaves were stood upright for drying. The men are told not to stop her.

2.16 Not only are the men not to stop her, they are ordered to make it easier for her by deliberately leaving some for her to gather. The Hebrew term for "bundles" (*tsebatim*) here differs from that for "sheaves" in the previous verse. This could imply that it refers to the bundles of grain cut by the men before they are gathered together into sheaves.

2.17 The verse marks a change of scene from Boaz's address to his workers to Ruth in the fields.

Ruth gleaned all day, then *beat out* the stalks, removing the grains of barley from the stalks. There are various methods used for beating the grain from the stalks. Altogether she had collected an *ephah of barley*. Unfortunately there is no consensus as to the exact amount represented by an ephah at that time. Various suggestions are: about 40 liters, or 25 pounds, perhaps 10 kilos. TCs will need to deal with the problem of translating weights and measures - transliterate and add a footnote, or use a modern equivalent if known.

2.18 Ruth took the grain home and showed Naomi how much she had gathered. The problem for translators in this verse is in identifying who does what since the Hebrew text uses only personal pronouns, "she" and "her."

Then she took out and gave her what was left over after she herself had been satisfied. The normal assumption is that the first *she* refers to Ruth and the pronoun *her* refers to Naomi. The one who *had been satisfied* is assumed to be Ruth, since there is a reference to her being satisfied in verse 14. There is, of course, no mention in the narrative in verse 14 of Ruth keeping some of the roasted grain from lunch to take home for Naomi.

2.19 Having seen the large amount Ruth brought home, inevitably the question arose as to where she had gleaned. The narrative uses two parallel question forms. This feature conveys Naomi's enthusiastic surprise.

Blessed be the man who took notice of you. The verb *took notice* can mean "recognize" but here probably implies something like "was kind enough to let you glean in his field." The passive *Blessed be* is not acceptable in some languages - suggest "May Yahweh bless..."

Ruth tells Naomi that it was Boaz who let her glean in his field.

2.20 Naomi reveals to Ruth the relationship between Boaz and her family. Boaz is a relative. Naomi again invites Yahweh to bless Boaz.

Whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead. The relative clause can refer to either Yahweh or Boaz. Commentators are divided. Normally the relative clause refers back to the last-mentioned individual, in this case, Yahweh. This is the better interpretation, but a reference to Boaz can also be justified. *His kindness* (Hebrew *chesedh*) carries the sense of one who keeps promises and obligations inherent within a relationship. It can be used of people or of Yahweh. Naomi sees Boaz's action as a recognition that her sad past, having lost husband and sons, has not been forgotten by God or her relative.

The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin. Naomi's revelation of the relationship between Boaz and herself reaches its climax. Boaz is a relative of her dead husband. She tells Ruth that not only is Boaz "near to us," he is actually "one of our nearest kin (*go'el*)."
TEV renders *go'el* as "one of those responsible for taking care of us." The role of the *Go'el* in Israelite society was an important one. TCs will need to explain something of the cultural significance of this role. Avenging the murder of a family member, buying land that had been lost to its family owner and restoring it to its owner, and helping a poor relative buy his or her way out of slavery, were some of the responsibilities of the redeemer-kinsman. This revelation opens the way for further developments in the story. It is important to note that Ruth is now considered part of

Naomi's family so that her relatives are now Ruth's relatives. Ruth is not just one of the resident aliens, *gerim*, but a member of Naomi's family.

2.21 Ruth continues to report on what had happened that day, seeming to ignore what Naomi had said about Boaz. Boaz has apparently told Ruth (verse 8) that until the harvest has been completed she can come regularly and glean in his fields. Here the word *servants* presumably includes both the men and women working for Boaz.

2.22 Naomi agrees and confirms that Ruth should stay close to the women working for Boaz and not to think of going to someone else's field.

Otherwise you might be bothered in another field. Since Ruth has special permission from Boaz to glean where the reapers are working, it would not be sensible to expect the same treatment from another landowner. The phrase *another field* implies working someone else's field rather than another belonging to Boaz. The Hebrew text here is literally "and (so that) they will not approach with you in another field." Translators may wish to follow the change suggested by NRSV, placing the focus on Ruth rather than on the reapers. CEV renders in very idiomatic English - "Who knows what might happen to you in someone else's field!"

My daughter - note the translation of this relationship since Ruth is not Naomi's blood daughter. See 1.11-12.

2.23 The passing of time is noted in the summary statement of this verse. Ruth continues to glean in Boaz's field through both the barley and wheat harvests. Barley is harvested earlier than the wheat crop. A second statement simply notes that she continued to live with Naomi. With these two statements the scene concludes. The final statement also leads into the next scene and chapter since Naomi has been concerned to find a more permanent home for Ruth.

Stayed close can be rendered as "worked with."

CHAPTER THREE

The next scene shows Naomi's concern for Ruth's situation and her desire to see her settled in another marriage. Ruth will eventually marry Boaz in a Hebrew customary arrangement called Levirate marriage. For Levirate marriage see Deut. 25.5-10.

3.1 Naomi is identified yet again as Ruth's *mother-in-law*. Note Hebrew preference for repetition. Translators may not require the same repetition once the relationship between the various personalities is established.

I need to seek some security for you is NRSV's rendering of the Hebrew "shall I not seek for you a resting place...?" Naomi puts a question to Ruth that is a RQ since the following dialogue does not indicate any answer from Ruth. TEV, NRSV etc. change the question form into a statement. A "resting place" implies more than just a place to stay for a short period; it implies a permanent place for Ruth to live. This will provide security for her as a widow. TEV's rendering "I must find a husband for you" is explicit and perhaps not very subtle!

So that it may be well with you renders the Hebrew "that will be good for you." The Hebrew relative marker *sher* refers directly to the "rest" but may also serve as a purpose marker. The sense is that this arrangement will be for Ruth's benefit. The verb based on the adjective "good" can refer to material good as well as general well-being. Suggest, "...that will be better for you (than staying here with me)."

3.2 Now marks the beginning of her suggested solution.

Now, here is....working. Naomi points directly to Boaz. She uses a RQ "Is Boaz not our relative?" that can be turned into a statement if necessary. However, there is something more subtle and suggestive about the RQ form than a direct statement - see NJB, NIV and RSV for example.

Winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Threshing involves removing the grain from the stalk and takes place before winnowing. Winnowing is the process of separating the grains from the chaff. Winnowing depended on the westerly breeze that usually blew in the afternoon and evening. The mixed grain and chaff are separated by throwing the mix into the air and letting the breeze blow the lighter chaff away. The *threshing floor* is the flat space reserved for these activities, located at a point where the breeze will blow the chaff away. TO's may need to deal with the problem of describing a process that is unknown in the local culture.

The verse states that Boaz will be winnowing the barley; in reality it is more likely that he is supervising rather than actually doing the work.

3.3 *Wash and anoint yourself and put on your best clothes.* Naomi advises Ruth how to prepare for a meeting with Boaz. *Wash* probably means to take a bath. Anointing may need to be clarified as anointing herself with perfume (NJB). NRSV suggests *put on your best clothes* while the text merely says, "put on your clothes." This is not to imply that Ruth is undressed, so making explicit that she should dress in her finest seems appropriate to the context.

Naomi suggests that Ruth wait until Boaz has finished his meal before she lets him know that she has come to see him. Here *drinking* would imply drinking wine.

3.4 After Boaz falls asleep, apparently at the threshing floor, Ruth is told to *go and uncover his feet and lie down*. Although some commentators have suggested that there are possible sexual connotations in this action, the UBS Handbook suggests that it is nothing other than a request for protection through marriage.

Naomi expects Boaz to interpret Ruth's action and to suggest what she should do next.

3.5 Ruth agrees to follow Naomi's advice. The word represented by "me" in NRSV is not in the best manuscripts. A marginal note places two vowels in the space between "you say" and "I will do." The vowels are those of the preposition "to me." Since the inclusion or omission of "to me" scarcely affects the meaning, translators should be free to follow the natural pattern of their language.

3.6 The narrative continues with Ruth doing as she said she would and following Naomi's advice. The verb *went down* does not necessarily mean that the threshing floor was downhill from where Ruth and Naomi lived. Note TEV simply has "Ruth went to..." However, it is possible that the threshing floor was down in the valley where the fields were. It was certainly some distance from the town and from his house.

3.7 Boaz finished his meal and *was in a contented mood*. Our Hebrew text is literally "his heart was good." We can say, "he felt good," "he felt relaxed" etc.

He went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. The threshed grain had been heaped up and Boaz lay alongside it. His intention may have been to protect his harvest since it was some way from the town. The *heap* has been clarified in NRSV as being of grain. Translators will need to follow this example or perhaps even identify it as of barley. For *lay down* we might also say he lay down to sleep, or even, "he went to sleep." This latter would indicate some time gap between Boaz lying down and Ruth coming to him.

Ruth then came *stealthily*, or quietly, uncovered Boaz's feet and lay down.

3.8 *At midnight* is actually "half the night" and so the time noted is not exactly midnight. "During the night" gives the sense better. Boaz stirred for some reason - he *was startled* and so woke up suddenly. He found a woman lying at his feet. The Hebrew *hinneh* expresses the element of surprise at his discovery. We should retain it in our translation.

3.9 Boaz asks who it is, unable to tell in the darkness. The text says that he knows it is a woman! Ruth identifies herself, again calling herself a *servant* (see 2.13). She then asks him to *spread your cloak over your servant*. The noun rendered *cloak* is the same as that in 2.12, "wing," so the connection with asking for protection is obvious. Ezek 16.8 uses the expression in the context of marriage, so Ruth's request is more than asking for protection from the night's cold. She is indicating her interest in marriage (See also Deut. 23.1; 27.20). This is made quite explicit in TEV. Ruth is most likely requesting a type of "Levirate marriage." Under Israelite law, when a man died, his brother was required to assume responsibility for his widow and marry her (Deut. 25.5-10). Boaz was not strictly her brother-in-law but the context and purpose is similar.

For you are next-of-kin, is Ruth's reason for inviting him to spread his cloak. As a relative of Naomi's and thus indirectly of Ruth's, he has the right and responsibility to act as her *go'el* (see note on 2.20).

3.10 Boaz calls for a blessing on Ruth for her family loyalty.

This last instance of your loyalty is better than the first. The word *loyalty* renders the Hebrew term *chesedh*, "covenant loyalty, kindness." *This last instance* refers to Ruth's offer of herself to Boaz. Boaz sees this act as surpassing the kindness that Ruth has shown to Naomi in the past (2.11). Boaz then explains what this last loyal act was, namely not seeking a younger man to marry but offering herself to a relative. He says *you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich*. This statement would seem to suggest that Boaz was a much older person than Ruth. It also suggests that a young woman would normally prefer a younger man, regardless of his financial position. Thus the loyalty of which Boaz speaks is her loyalty to the family and to local custom.

3.11 *And now* repeats the important marker noted in verse 2 - see also verse 12. In terms of the development of the discourse, these markers indicate a change in direction. Here in this chapter a statement of a situation is made, then the *and now* changes the direction of the speech to introduce a new thought based on that situation or arising out of it.

Boaz calls for Ruth not to be afraid. In the circumstances this might seem an odd thing to say to one who is risking herself by the offer she has made to Boaz. However, the phrase "Do not be afraid" is one that Hebrew uses in many different settings. Here it is to assure Ruth that all will be well and that she should not worry that he will not reject her.

All the assembly of my people renders a Hebrew text that is literally, "all the gate of my people." The noun "gate" is a reference to the town, so the meaning is "everyone in town."

A worthy woman is literally "a woman of strength." In Prov 12.4, 31.10, 29 the adjective refers to a woman who is capable, efficient, worthy. Here it could mean "a person of principle," "a person of excellent character and morals." It is clearly very complimentary.

3.12 This also begins with *And now*, marking a further change in direction. Because Ruth is seen as a good woman, Boaz has now to advise her that there is a relative closer than he is to Naomi. This relative should be the first to receive Ruth's offer, according to local custom. The narrative does not give the next-of-kin's name at any point; he remains nameless.

3.13 Boaz urges Ruth to remain where she is for the rest of the night. Boaz is ready to act quickly to resolve the matter, suggesting that they enquire about the closer relative's wishes in the morning.

If he will act as next-of-kin for you, good. Boaz agrees to accept the other relative's decision. The Hebrew verb rendered as "act as next-of-kin" means to fulfil what a *go'el* should fulfil, in this case accepting the responsibility to marry Ruth. See notes on levirate marriage in 3.1 and Deut 25.5-10.

If the other relative is unwilling to accept Ruth's offer then Boaz promises under oath that he will do so. The oath formula *as the Lord lives* requires identification as an oath or sworn promise - see TEV "I swear by the living Lord." Translation will usually require some modification of the form if it is to be understood.

Ruth is again urged to lie down and wait till the morning.

3.14 Ruth got up very early, *before one person could recognize another*. This descriptive phrase can be readily understood as referring to the pre-dawn time before it is light. Boaz was the one to suggest she leave him. Translators are advised to name Boaz rather than retain the pronoun "he" in the literal "and he said." This phrase is slightly difficult in the sense that Boaz's words indicate no listener - he does not use second person address. It is probable that the verb expresses Boaz's thought rather than spoken words. Thus Boaz thought he didn't want anyone to know that a woman had come to him that night.

It must not be known that... is a passive form that may need to be expressed as an active in many languages. We can say, "I don't want anybody knowing that..." or "It is best that nobody know that..."

Use of the general term *the woman* rather than using Ruth's name suggests Boaz's thoughts rather than words spoken.

If Ruth was seen to have been at the threshing floor with him her reputation would have been damaged. The other relative would invariably assume that something had happened between Boaz and Ruth and have grounds for rejecting her offer. Boaz's situation would have been difficult as well, on the assumption that he did not respect the closer relative's right.

3.15 Boaz gives her more barley to carry home. Her cloak serves as a container, slung over her shoulder. *Six measures* - TCs will need here also to deal with OT weights and measures in translation - here it is about twenty kilos.

The narrative is abbreviated at this point with a brief reference to Boaz leaving for town.

3.16 At home again, Naomi wants to know what transpired. Ruth gives her the details. But *all that the man had done for her* is defined in the following verse as giving her food.

3.17 To Naomi's question about how things went, Ruth merely tells her what he gave her to bring home; she says nothing about their conversation. Ruth reports Boaz's speech so the issue of how one might handle quotes within quotes in the target language needs to be discussed.

3.18 Naomi's response suggests that she knows far more than the narrative details. She urges Ruth to be patient and await the outcome of *the matter*. The Hebrew idiom is literally "how the matter will fall."

Perhaps Naomi knows more than is indicated in the text. She also seems to know that Boaz will hurry to settle the matter. The Hebrew verb is *killah*, "to bring a matter to an end or conclusion."

That he will do it that very day indicates her knowledge of Boaz's deep interest in fulfilling his responsibility as a relative.

CHAPTER FOUR

The chapter can be divided into three parts: verses 1-12 which describes the procedure for Boaz to be recognized as the relative with the right to marry Ruth and the marriage itself; verses 13-17 referring to the birth of their son Obed; verses 18-21 a genealogy linking this new child with David.

4.1 *No sooner had Boaz gone up...* is NRSV's way of rendering the Hebrew conjunction "And" with which the verse begins. Its rendering is dependent upon the context that suggests the happy coincidence of Boaz's arrival at the city gate just as the nameless next-of-kin walks by. The verb *go up* does not always imply ascending. Here the sense may be merely that he went there.

The gate refers to the area around the entrance to the city where all town business was transacted. It was inside the large city gates that were part of the city's defense. In this context it is a socio-legal transaction. NB TEV's rendering "the meeting place at the town gate."

Boaz invites the relative to come and sit down with him. He refers to the relative as *Friend*, the Hebrew term simply being "a certain (person)." Some scholars suggest calling him "Mr. So-and-So." Explanations for such an apparently impersonal invitation have been many, but none are very satisfying. Since the relative is nameless throughout chapter 3, it is not surprising that here the storyteller does not give him a name. "My friend" seems a good equivalent under the circumstances.

4.2 Boaz then calls on ten elders to join them. The Hebrew text is literally "he took 10..."; we can say, "he invited...", or if that sounds too formal, "he had 10 elders sit with them..." *Elders* are men who both are older as well as holding a certain recognized position within the community.

4.3 Boaz refers to Naomi's return from Moab and to the fact that with Elimelech's death she is about to sell a piece of land that belonged to him. Boaz begins by referring to the land for sale rather than marriage to Ruth. Property ownership was an important family matter and so a relative has the right to take up land that is left when there are no sons to inherit. It is referred to as *the parcel of land*, or "piece" of land.

Is selling (TEV "wants to sell") is grammatically problematic since it is a perfect form in Hebrew. This normally indicates something completed. In this case it is the decision to sell that is decided already.

Kinsman is in Hebrew, "our brother." This relationship term probably means they are cousins. Discuss kinship terms in the target language and what might be appropriate here.

4.4 *So I thought* renders Hebrew "I said." Hebrew generally uses this verb for all senses of reflection and thought. *I would tell you of it* is literally "I will uncover your ear," a figurative expression. It may also imply a measure of secrecy.

Buy it in the presence of those sitting here. Use of the imperative *Buy* probably is more of an urging or strong recommendation rather than a command.

Those sitting here and *elders of my people* are synonymous in this case. Both refer to the official witnesses of this transaction.

Boaz wants to know officially, in the presence of these men as witnesses, whether the nameless relative wants to purchase the land. If he doesn't then Boaz wants to do so. Boaz must give first choice to the closest relative to Elimelech; he then is the second closest.

So he said refers to the unnamed relative. He expresses a willingness to buy the land.

4.5 The storyteller is building up tension in this way, giving the impression that Ruth may end up as the husband of this other relative and not Boaz. Boaz now advises the relative that if he buys the field he thus acquires Ruth. Ruth is described in two phrases - the Moabitess and the wife of the dead man. Hebrew refers to this process as "acquiring" Ruth along with the land. This expression relates to the OT attitude to a woman as a thing to be possessed.

To maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance. The one who acts as the *go'el* has the responsibility of raising up children to the dead person. The son born of that relationship is helping to preserve the name of the dead person within the family. *Name* means more than just an individual's name; it includes his memory and reputation. Here *inheritance* is another way of referring to the piece of land that will be then owned by son born to the *go'el*.

4.6 The introductory Hebrew conjunction can mean "Then." The relative realizes that there are some problems for him if he buys the field and is required to "take possession" of Ruth as well. He says, *I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance.* The relative is unwilling to buy Naomi's land because he fears that it might *damage* his inheritance. The verb *damage* is a storing word and can mean "destroy." Here *inheritance* also refers to his land but in the specific context means the land that he would pass on to his own children. How the purchase of other land might damage the land rights of his own children is not explained, though commentators offer many possible scenarios - none are more than guesswork!

As a result the relative passes the right of the *go'el* to Boaz.

4.7 An editor's note follows; it gives the background to the custom about to be mentioned. The note makes clear that the story is being recorded at a time when the custom was no longer practiced or known in Israel. It is a deliberate break in the narrative. Some languages will be able to mark this in a specific way.

In former times or "previously," "before."

Redeeming and exchanging are two abstract nouns. They refer to the actions or the processes involved in certain kinds of business transaction, or in this case the way the *go'el* process works. We can say, "how a person redeems or exchanges things."

To confirm a transaction is literally "to establish any matter." Whether this refers to giving up a right to another, or to the sealing of a purchase contract cannot be determined. (Boaz doesn't buy the land until later and there is no mention of taking off a shoe, so it is more likely that this is a practice connected with giving up a right). We can say, "To settle any matter..." and leave it as vague as the Hebrew.

The one took off a sandal and gave it to the other. The symbolic action of passing over one's shoe indicated transfer of rights.

This was the manner of attesting in Israel is parallel to the phrase about confirming a transaction. It is literally "this the attesting in Israel." An expanded phrase is probably necessary in most other languages.

There are three abstract nouns in this verse that are formally similar and so give a sound repetition - *hagg'ullah*, *hatt'murah*, *hatt'udah*. Each speaks of the way or manner of doing something.

4.8 The narrator now can refer to the relative's action of taking off his shoe. When he abandoned his right to buy the land and so acquire Ruth, he took off his shoe in an action that passes the right to Boaz. Although the text does not say he handed his shoe to Boaz, we can imply that this took place.

4.9 Boaz turns to the elders who are present and formally recognizes their role as witnesses of the action. This action witnessed would have legal consequences, the community now recognizing that Boaz is Elimelech's *go'el*. We note that what belonged to Elimelech would have passed to his sons Chilion and Mahlon but now has come to Boaz.

4.10 Boaz also has "acquired" Ruth in this process to be his wife.

A purpose clause follows. It is so that the dead man's name can continue on the land that the family owned. Then a result clause - any son born will ensure that *the dead man's name will not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place*. On *name* see comment above. To die without leaving any male descendent means that a person's name and memory will be lost to the community. Levirate marriage is a way to ensure that a person will not be forgotten; they will live on. *Kindred* is literally "brothers." The *gate of his native place* refers to the ancestral town - see notes on 3.11 for "gate."

Today you are witnesses is an inclusio that brackets Boaz's speech to the elders.

4.11 There were many others from the town present as well as the officials. All responded that they were witnesses to what was agreed upon.

Obviously not everyone spoke the following words of prayer or blessing upon the new arrangement. It is more likely that a representative would have spoken on their behalf wishing the new couple well, or that the group expressed sentiments like this.

Like Rachel and Leah who together built up the house of Israel. The two wives of Jacob are said to have *built up the house of Israel*. That is, they produced numerous children. Here *house* is a metaphor for a family or dynasty. TEV says "who bore many children to Jacob." We could also say something like "from whom the whole family of Israel is descended."

The prayer of blessing continues: *May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem*. This explains the previous clause. It consists of two parallel clauses such that producing children and bestowing a name are to be seen as equivalent; the names of the town, Bethlehem, and the area, Ephrathah, are also parallel. Ephrathah may have been an ancient name for the region of Bethlehem. However, the rendering "produce children" is literally "do/make strength," (*aseh chayil*). The noun *chayil* can mean, strength, power, wealth. Translations vary in the element they consider to be in focus. TEV thinks it is wealth, as does RSV; NJB takes it to mean power; NRSV makes it explicit - children.

4.12 The words of the blessing continue. *May your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah*. This refers back to Perez the ancestor of Boaz (see verses 18-21), the child produced by Judah and Tamar (Gen 38).

4.13 In this second section of the chapter the scene changes. Boaz takes Ruth as his wife and she bears a son. It is presented here as a gift from Yahweh. Considerable time has elapsed since verse 12.

4.14 Here it is the women of Bethlehem who thank God for the gift of Ruth's son. *Blessed be the Lord* means that they thank Yahweh. They thank God that now Naomi has a grandson. They also call for God's blessing on the child with the words, *may his name be renowned in Israel*. They hope that he will become a famous person in Israel, anticipating the fact that this child will

become a forebear of David. On *name* see above. The text is literally "may his name be called in Israel," meaning that they hope people will recognise his name and importance.

4.15 For Naomi this child will become *a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age*. Children were not only a sign of God's blessing; there was a practical value in that they would look after the older generation in time. In this case the child replaces Naomi's two sons and in that sense will restore life to her and care for her in her old age.

For here introduces an explanatory clause. This child is the son of Ruth, described as one who loves Naomi and is flattered with the description of her being of more value to Naomi than 7 sons. This is hyperbole. However, in translation we need to consider the way in which we render the noun phrase, literally "she better to you than..." NEB and TEV render as a past tense; others render as present. The past tense rendering looks back to what Ruth has already done for Naomi. Either past or present tense can be used in English.

4.16 Naomi takes and cradles the child in her arms, a sign of her welcoming the child with joy. There has been a suggestion that this action of Naomi's was equivalent to an adoption procedure but there is no evidence for this in the text. However, see TEV footnote.

Became his nurse does not imply that Naomi breast-fed the child but that she became his guardian - see 2 Sam 4.4.

4.17 The child is given a name by the women of the village - he is called Obed. The child is Naomi's grandson, not her son in the strict sense. However, in Hebrew kinship terms he can be called her *ben*.

4.18 The final section of the chapter lists the genealogy that follows from the end of verse 17, tracing the lineage back to Perez. Different cultures handle genealogies differently - establish whether in translation the list should move back from David to Perez or can remain as moving from Perez to David; others may need to focus on Obed and indicate relationships back to Perez and forward to David.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

Practice Passage Two

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

THE BOOK OF JONAH

The following notes point out some of the rhetorical and other exegetical and translational issues in the book of Jonah. Translation Consultants may find this a helpful list of elements to which translator's attention must be drawn as they attempt a practice translation. These elements are referenced from the NRSV translation of the Bible.

A Unique Book

The book of Jonah is unique. It is not prophecy, nor is it history. It is completely unlike any genuine prophetic book. How then should we characterise it? Calling it a Parable avoids some of the pitfalls of other terms, even though it is still inadequate.

CHAPTER ONE

There are several overall features that should be noted by the translator when approaching the first chapter of Jonah. To begin with, the introductory statement in verse 1 looks like that of a prophetic book. However, the book of Jonah is a narrative about a prophet told in the third person. Attention should be drawn to the subtle use of the verb *yare*, beginning as 'fear' and ending as 'worship'. Furthermore the translator should note the theme, that of the 'good foreigners' in contrast to the 'bad prophet'. In other words Jonah is presented as the anti-hero, being everything that a true prophet was not (this theme comes to a climax in chapter 4). In addition to this, the author plays on the verbs *go up* and *go down*. And lastly, notice the use of the word *hurled* (also translated *threw*) used 4 times in the chapter, and the phrase *from the presence of the LORD* used 3 times. These are keywords and phrases in the chapter. The use of repetition throughout is for emphasis, many of the repeated terms or phrases carrying important themes.

There are no obvious discourse markers since the narrative flows along with the course of events. The story begins with God's call of Jonah together with the motivation for the call (verse 2). Rather than obey the call as a prophet should, Jonah turned the other way. The theme of the chapter is carried in the repeated phrase in verse 3 that Jonah tried to escape "from the presence of the Lord." The rest of the chapter flows from there.

1.1 *Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai, saying,*

- Notice the formal introduction to a prophetic book or speech (cf Amos 1.1). As a result the book appears to be a traditional prophetic work - but it is not.
- Discuss how to render the divine name Yahweh and how this should be handled in translation. Discuss this in light of the traditional rendering if there is one.

1.2 *"Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me."*

- "Arise, go..." (RSV). Note the function of the verb "rise" in Hebrew, marking the beginning of an action. It need not be translated literally - see NRSV.
- Nineveh - capital of the Assyrian empire located on the Tigris River. Said to have been founded by Nimrod (Gen 10.11). It was destroyed in 612 BC.
- *Cry out against it* - note that the verb *cry* can be glossed in a number of ways depending on the context. Here it means "speak against."

- *Has come up before me.* An idiomatic use of the verb "come up" meaning that it has come to God's attention.

1.3 *But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.*

- *Jonah set out to flee* uses the verb "arose" - it is another example of this verb marking the beginning of an action. The main verb is *flee*.
- *But* - the Hebrew conjunction can mean "and" or "but" depending on context.
- Note the phrase *from the presence of the LORD* used twice in this verse and in verse 10. The significance of repetition in Hebrew is that it gives emphasis, here drawing special attention to Jonah's disobedience. The phrase links also with 2.4.
- *Ship* - as a relatively large vessel some languages may not have an adequate term. Discuss with the translator how to deal with the lack of terms in a given language.
- Note also Jonah's cultural 'baggage'; he believed that to leave Israel would take him outside God's influence. Attempting to escape Yahweh's presence is folly (Psa 137.9)
- *Tarshish* - its precise location is uncertain but it is often thought to have been on the eastern coast of Spain (see TEV). It represented some very distant foreign place.
- Discuss the issue of rendering names, personal and geographical. Should we translate or transliterate such names? Should the modern name be used for cities and countries?
- This verse is important in drawing the contrast between the disobedient Jonah and Israel's real prophets.

1.4 *But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, and such a mighty storm came upon the sea that the ship threatened to break up.*

- Notice the repetition of *hurled* (verses 5, 12, 15). God uses various elements in the natural world in unusual ways (see also 1.17 and 4.6-8, marked by the repeated use of the verb 'appointed'). Repetition is for cohesion and emphasis.
- *Sea* - how to render this when there is no word in the target language.

1.5 *Then the mariners were afraid, and each cried to his god. They threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten it for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the ship and had lain down, and was fast asleep.*

- *Afraid* - note the key role of this verb in the chapter (verses 5, 9, 10, 16). Its meaning changes from "fear" to "worship" depending on the context. The climactic use comes in verse 16 in which the sailors fear/worship Yahweh.
- *Each cried to his god.* The verb *cry* here refers to calls or prayers for help.
- The Hebrew term '*elohim* "god"' can also be translated "God" showing the importance of context for determining translation.
- *To lighten it for them.* Presumably this is to make the ship ride higher in the water and so it is less likely to fill with water from the huge waves.
- Contrast the sailors' 'fear' and Jonah's nonchalance. If the sailors were afraid of the sea, what do we make of the response of Jonah who had never been to sea?

1.6 *The captain came and said to him, "What are you doing sound asleep? Get up, call on your god! Perhaps the god will spare us a thought so that we do not perish."*

- *Get up...* here the verb "arise" has its regular sense of getting up, in view of the context.
- *Call on your god* - the meaning is to pray.
- *The god* - could be translated "God" but here it has the definite article and so is more generic.

- *Spare us a thought* refers to the sailors' hope that this god will be kind to them.
- *So that we do not perish* - see verse 14 and 3.9.

1.7 *The sailors said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, so that we may know on whose account this calamity has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.*

- Note the cultural practice of casting lots. In Israel, casting lots was a means of discovering the will of God. The sailors clearly believed that this practice would reveal who was the cause of their present fearful situation. How can this phrase be translated in a different religious or cultural context?
- *The lot fell on...* is an idiomatic way of saying that result of casting the lots showed in this case who the offender was. In other contexts it expresses the result of casting lots.

1.8 *Then they said to him, "Tell us why this calamity has come upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?"*

- A series of four questions leads into Jonah's response.
- *Tell us...upon us*. REB treats this as a statement, "...wanted to be told how he was to blame." NJV treats it as a participial clause, "Tell us, you who have brought this misfortune upon us,..." NAB omits the phrase which is also missing from some Hebrew and LXX MSS. Since NRSV probably reflects the best of recent scholarship on this point we retain the MT. The sailors want to know from Jonah why this trouble has happened to them, hoping he can explain it.

1.9 *"I am a Hebrew," he replied. "I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."*

- The term *Hebrew* is used by foreigners to refer to Israelites. So here Jonah refers to himself using the term the sailors would know have used.
- Notice the use of the word *fear* (RSV) with the meaning 'worship' or 'reverence.' It contrasts with its use in verses 5 and 10.
- *God of Heaven* - determine the sense of the genitive form here: "God who is in the heavens?" "God who made the heavens?" "God who controls the heavens?" Discuss the concept of *Heaven*, here meaning the heavens above rather than the NT use of the term.

1.10 *Then the men were even more afraid, and said to him, "What is this that you have done!" For the men knew that he was fleeing from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them so.*

- Note the repetition of the key phrase *from the presence of the LORD*.
- *What...done?* The question form has the force of a strong exclamation, implying Jonah has done something he shouldn't have done - see TEV. *This* refers to the act of trying to run away from the Creator God.
- The sailors' increased fear results from Jonah's answers to their questions in verse 9 so it has to do with discovering that Jonah's God is the Creator.
- *Because he had told them* seems to suggest that Jonah had already told them that he was running away from God.

1.12 *He said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will quiet down for you; for I know it is because of me that this great storm has come upon you."*

- The verb *throw* and the verb *hurled* in verse 4 are the same in Hebrew.
- Note Jonah's theology - Yahweh the Creator is in control. However he does not appear to have seen that his theology was at odds with his attempt to run away. Even the foreign sailors saw

that! Jonah also seems to believe that human sacrifice will solve the problem for the sailors. This is another element in the picture of Jonah as being everything that a true prophet should not be.

1.13 *Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring the ship back to land, but they could not, for the sea grew more and more stormy against them.*

- Note the repetition of the phrase, *grew more and more tempestuous...them*. Here the repetition is used to build more drama into the narrative.
- The initial *Nevertheless* makes a strong contrast between Jonah's request and the sailors' response. The Hebrew conjunction can have this function, but it could also simply be "but" or "then."
- *They could not* means that they could not reach the land.

1.14 *Then they cried out to the LORD, "Please, O LORD, we pray, do not let us perish on account of this man's life. Do not make us guilty of innocent blood; for you, O LORD, have done as it pleased you."*

- Notice here another use of the verb 'cry'. Here it means 'pray'. They cried to Jonah's God Yahweh rather than to their own gods. This is important to the theme of the book as it demonstrates how foreigners can respond to Yahweh.
- *We pray* - connotes pleading or begging, not praying.
- The phrase *innocent blood* cannot mean that blood is innocent. What is the meaning of this phrase? Note the figurative use of *blood* as the life of a person. Those who are innocent are the sailors - they are innocent of taking Jonah's life since he will surely drown if he is thrown into the sea. Two possible reasons they can claim to be innocent are: (i) that Jonah has asked to be thrown into the sea, and (ii) Yahweh caused the storm.
- *You...have done as it pleased you*. Literally this is "you have done according to your plan or intention." They acknowledge that Yahweh has worked out his purposes for Jonah in this event.

1.15 *So they picked Jonah up and threw him into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging.*

- Note the use of the verb 'hurled' (*threw*) again.
- Jonah was correct. The Creator of the sea caused the storm to cease.

1.16 *Then the men feared the LORD even more, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.*

- The phrase *feared the LORD* here means they worshiped Yahweh (see the added definition '*offered sacrifice and made vows*'). The expression is the same as used of Jonah in verse 9. Use of the Hebrew verb *yare'* is one of the special features of this chapter. It serves to show how the foreigners moved from real fear to awe or worship of Yahweh. The phrase is literally "they feared Yahweh (with) a great fear." They were in awe of Yahweh's power over the sea.
- Consider the Old Testament religious terms 'sacrifice' and 'vow'. Discuss how the translator might handle these in their own cultural and religious context. Raise the issue of using local religious terms in the Bible. What and how might the sailors have sacrificed on board ship? What kind of vow might they have made?
- This verse comes as the climax in the encounter between Jonah the Israelite and the foreign sailors. It is of vital importance for the theme of the book - Jonah as the "anti-hero" and foreigners as potential God-fearers.

1.17 *But the LORD provided a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.*

- Note verse numbering - 1.17 = Hebrew 2.1

- The key verb *appointed* defines God as the one who controls creation (NRSV uses *provided* here but in chapter 4 each use is translated *appointed*.) We note the repetition of this verb in 4.6, 7 and 8. Consider also Jonah's confession in verse 9.
- The term *fish* is a generic term, not specific. Discuss how the translator might deal with this if there are no generic terms.

2.1 *Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the belly of the fish,*

- This verse concludes this opening scene; it also introduces the poem in 2.2. Note the pivotal discourse role of this verse. Readers can jump from this verse to 2.10 for the continuation of the storyline.

CHAPTER TWO

The Consultant will need to deal with the special challenges of translating poetry, at least in a general way, before approaching this chapter. The most obvious feature to be mentioned is that of parallel lines - so-called synonymous parallelism, antithetical parallelism and step-parallelism. Point out that if a term in one line is difficult to understand, the parallel term may help define it. Deal with the challenge of finding parallel terms in languages with a limited vocabulary range in certain specific areas.

If this is an introductory workshop, then only some basic guidelines about Hebrew poetry need to be given. The Translation Consultant must alert translators to the difference between the use of words in narrative and in poetry, with the latter usually more figurative.

Following their attempts to translate poetry, question them about their findings.

2.2 *...saying,*

*"I called to the LORD out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.*

- The verse begins with a poem or prayer. The poem appears as an insert into the narrative. Point out the editorial significance of this - either using a known psalm or creating one especially for here. It is probably the author's intention to have Jonah make some response to his predicament and to use a traditional religious form for that, namely a psalm.
- This is a Psalm of Thanksgiving usually used by one who has been saved, not a prayer for help. Compare this with another such form - e.g. Psalms 40.1-10; 92.1-15.
- Point out the apparent disjunction between the narrative and the Psalm both in form and content. That is, the narrative flows from 1.17 directly to 2.10. Little in the psalm seems to fit Jonah's actual situation apart from the phrase in verse 4 about God's presence and the mention of being in the sea.
- Draw attention to the parallelism of the lines.
- The introductory word *saying* - is equivalent to inverted commas as an introduction to direct speech.
- Note another use of the verb 'cry'. Here it means to pray.
- Point out the change from *he* in line A to *thou* in line B. Note that Hebrew poetry often changes person, but the significance of the change is unknown in most cases.
- Explain the worldview lying behind the concept of *She'ol*. It is the place to which all the dead go, whether they are good or bad. It should not be confused with the NT view of Heaven.

2.3 *You cast me into the deep,*

*into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;*

*all your waves and your billows
passed over me.*

- When dealing with the synonyms *deep*, *seas*, *flood*, *waves*, *billows*, what should the translator do if the target language has few of these? One possibility is to combine lines or reduce the number of lines since they are largely synonymous.
- Draw attention to the use of multiple phrases to describe a single situation as a common feature of Hebrew poetry.
- Who is *You* in the accusation that he was thrown into the sea? Whose *waves* and *billows* are they? The implied subject is Yahweh, who created the sea (1.9).

2.4 *Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight;
how shall I look again
upon your holy temple?*

- Note the repetition of the phrase *from thy presence* and its similarity to *from the presence of the LORD* in chapter 1. This, and the reference to seas, provides a clue to the author's reason for choosing this particular psalm for inclusion here.
- *I am driven away from...* Think about how to deal with passive voice in those languages which have none, or which prefer not to use one in certain contexts. In active voice we can use the same subject as in the previous verse.
- There is a textual problem in the second half of the question—the word *how* in RSV. TEV has a negative sense here "I would never see your...again." The problem is caused by the Hebrew text. Some MSS read "how" and others "nevertheless" (Heb. 'ak or 'ek). "How" gives the negative sense reflected in RSV/NRSV and TEV; alternatively, "nevertheless" gives a positive sense - "yet here I am in your Temple..." This latter is consistent with a Thanksgiving after being rescued; it does not of course fit with the narrative in which Jonah is praying from the fish's belly. This raises the issue of how translators deal with textual problems - introduce them to HOTTP and its decisions - though most have been incorporated into TEV.

2.5 *The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head*

- The poet describes how he sank to the bottom of the sea and found himself among the *weeds*, or sea grass, on the bottom.

2.6 *...at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;
yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O LORD my God.*

- Note the vivid imagery and mixture of metaphors. What are the *roots of the mountain* and the *bars of the earth*? The first phrase, which completes the sentence from the previous verse, could imply that the mountains rise from the sea and so Jonah is at the bottom of the sea where the "roots" of those mountains are. In the second phrase there is a change in situation. The poet is buried in the ground. Remind translators that in poetry there are often such sudden changes in metaphor, for example in psalms. It is not always possible nor desirable to try to link each metaphor with an aspect of the surrounding narrative. (On many occasions, especially in the NT, quotations or inter-textual references can apply only part of the quote)
- Explain the concept of *the Pit* or *Sheol* - see verse 2.

- *My life* here uses a Hebrew term that comes from the verb "live." It emphasizes the liveliness of the person. It is not the same as *life* in the following verse.

2.7 *As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.*

- Note the fuller meaning of *my life* (Heb. *nephesh*) linking it with Gen. 2.7 - it is what animates a person, what God breathed into the human form to make it come alive and to make it a real human being. Here it refers to the person using the prayer. We might call it "my life breath..." RSV translates as "soul" but this is not an OT concept.
- Determine the contextual meaning of *remember*. It can mean to recall but it has a wider sense namely that of thinking about something and acting on it. In this case the following lines define what it means - praying to Yahweh.
- Some commentators suggest that the *temple* here is not the Jerusalem Temple but Heaven.

2.8 *Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.*

- *Idols* is a pejorative term and so *those who worship idols* carries a sense of condemnation of those people.
- Note the change from first and second person address to third person general statement.

2.9 *But I with the voice of thanksgiving will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the Lord!*

- The terms 'sacrifice' and 'vow' link back to 1.16, further illustrating the connection between this psalm and the first scene of the story. All Thanksgiving Psalms contain this kind of promise.
- The Thanksgiving psalm closes with a final liturgical shout. It seems to mean, "Yahweh is the one who rescues (or rescued me)."

2.10 *Then the LORD spoke to the fish, and it spewed Jonah out upon the dry land.*

- This verse continues or picks up the narrative broken off at verse 1. Translators will need to think about how the target language resumes a narrative after a temporal or literary break. It may be important to use a special particle or repeat the phrase from where the narrative broke off to remind readers that the story is going to continue from this point.
- How does this language deal with God speaking to a fish? Should the verb "spoke" be rendered literally?

CHAPTER THREE

Jonah is given a second chance to do as Yahweh calls him to do. This time he obeys but does so rather reluctantly. His "sermon" offers no hope for the people of Nineveh. He seems to want God to destroy them. There is heavy irony in the contrast between Jonah's sermon and that of the king - this foreign king was the real preacher, not Jonah. Note also the heavy use of hyperbole or exaggeration: the size of Nineveh; the king's and people's total repentance; the repentance of animals. Hyperbole is a device used deliberately by the author of the story/parable to make his point more strongly.

3.2 *"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you."*

- Compare this verse with the form and content of 1.2. Avoid the temptation to harmonise.
- *Great* can mean large in size or importance. Both seem to apply here.

3.3 *So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across.*

- The Hebrew expression rendered as *an exceedingly large city* is unusual. It is an idiomatic use of "(great) to god" (*l'elohim*) to express vastness - literally "a city great to God."
- *According to the word of the Lord* indicates that Jonah went in accordance with what Yahweh had requested.
- *Three days' journey*. Translators need to deal with the interpretation problem. The question is whether the city is so large that it requires three days to walk across it, or three days to go around it. In any event this is hyperbole since ruins of ancient cities indicate that most could be walked around within the hour.

3.4 *Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"*

- Notice yet another use of the verb *cry*. Here it means "proclaimed."
- A passive verb *shall be overthrown* - this requires the subject to be identified in some languages. However, if we actually translate it as "Yahweh will overthrow..." then we are saying much more than Jonah said. In the story he does not mention who will do this. Speaking so indirectly seems to be a deliberate decision by the writer.
- Note the use of the traditional number *forty*. It usually means a fixed period, not necessarily an actual number "40," but in translation we should retain that.

3.5 *And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.*

- We note the utter brevity and vague content of Jonah's 'sermon' but the incredible response of the foreigners. This is the author's first comment on Jonah as a prophet. It is full of irony since prophets usually preached with little or no result! However, this very brief sermon has outstanding results.
- Fasting, or going without food for some specific purpose, was used in Israel to show repentance or as a sign of mourning.
- *Sackcloth*, a rough fabric, was worn as a sign of mourning.

3.6 *When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.*

- We see again the use of irony. Jonah's 5-word sermon in Hebrew converts the foreign king of Nineveh, Israel's great enemy. No other prophet ever had such success!
- *And sat in ashes*. Sitting in ashes was a further sign of sorrow.

3.7 *Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: "By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water.*

3.8 *Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands.*

3.9 *Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish."*

- The real preacher in this book is not Jonah but the foreign king! Note the heavy use of irony. Translators should try to convey that same feeling and nuance. The king's preaching calls on all creatures, human and animal, to demonstrate their repentance in the customary way.
- *Who knows?* This is a rhetorical question probably expecting the answer "Nobody knows." There seems to be some doubt in the speaker's mind but nevertheless the hope that God will not do as he said he would, provided people repent.
- God *changes his mind* - see the RSV for a more literal rendering of the Hebrew text. There the word "repent" has the sense of turning from a decision to do one thing and instead doing something else.

3.10 *When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.*

- In this verse the Hebrew text uses the word *ra'ah* twice. It appears as "evil ways" and "calamity." The word carries both meanings. Translators need to be aware that Hebrew roots can have a wide semantic range.

CHAPTER FOUR

The dialogue between Jonah and Yahweh is the key element in this chapter. It is dominated by the use of questions from God to Jonah. Jonah's character is presented forcefully—he is petulant and angry with God. Repeated phrases form an important part of the dialogue and show the contrasting character of God and Jonah.

4.2 *He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing."*

- Jonah *prayed*. In this context it is used to describe Jonah's angry outburst against God. Choose an appropriate word that can convey something of Jonah's anger.
- Note the irony again. Jonah's excellent theology is his excuse for refusing to obey!
- *Slow to anger* means that Yahweh does not get angry so easily, quite unlike Jonah himself.
- *Abounding* refers to how abundant something is, so here Yahweh is full of love etc.

4.3 *And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live."*

- Jonah the anti-hero. This 'prophet' would rather die than obey. Take note of the repetition of the phrase *better for me to die than to live* (verses 3,8,9) and its discourse function in the chapter. The repetition stresses the petulant nature of Jonah.

4.4 *And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?"*

- God's question about Jonah's right to be so angry is repeated in verse 9. As a rhetorical question, its meaning is that Jonah has no right to be angry.
- Highlight the importance of repetition in this dialogue and the role it plays. Is this something the translator can or should try to match in translation?

4.5 *Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.*

- A *booth* is a temporary shelter.
- Jonah waits to see what will happen to Nineveh. Presumably he expects it will be destroyed, something he would no doubt be happy to see. The dialog in this chapter indicates that Jonah has not really had a change of heart with regard to his enemies.

- *East of the city.* This is an opportunity to discuss compass directions in some cultures - many may have an "east" and "west" equivalent but not for other compass points.

4.6 *The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush.*

- Note the repetition of the verb phrase *God appointed* a plant, a worm, a hot wind (verse 6-8). The repetition emphasizes God's graciousness and concern. It also indicates God's control of nature. Note this same verb in 1.17.

4.8 *When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."*

- In Israel the desert lies to the east and the wind from there is hot and dry (sirocco). Jonah, east of the city, is unprotected from its blast.
- Translators will need to consider what to do in areas where an easterly wind is a cooling one. It may be best to say "a hot desert wind..."

4.9 *But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes, angry enough to die."*

- The dialogue is similar to verses 3-4.

4.10-11 *Then the LORD said, "You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"*

- These two verses form the climax to the dialogue and to the book as a whole. As such translators should ensure that their function is clearly marked.
- The book reaches a climax with a question lacking an answer.
- Clarify the meaning of the phrase *one hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left*. There is a question about how to render numerals, especially large numbers.
- *Who do not know their right hand from their left* is often considered to refer to children - note TEV "innocent children." The sense would seem to be that they are too young to know this difference, not that they were people who were somewhat mentally retarded and couldn't make that distinction.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Practice Passage Three

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

MARK CHAPTER 1

Introduction:

Many people begin their work of Bible translation with the gospel of Mark, perhaps partly because it is the shortest gospel. This means that for many translation teams, the first chapter of Mark may be where they begin their work of Bible translation. Unfortunately, parts of the chapter are not very easy to translate.

The chapter is made up of nine short sections which tell about the beginning of Jesus' ministry and give some examples of the things Jesus did. We read first about the ministry of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus. After that there are short sections on Jesus' baptism, temptation, and the beginning of his ministry in Galilee. The next section tells about Jesus choosing his first disciples. The chapter ends with three sections which tell about Jesus healing and casting out demons, and one general section about Jesus' ministry.

The Preaching of John the Baptist, Mark 1.1-8

1.1 The first sentence of Mark is not a complete sentence. It is more like a title or section heading. However, it can be translated as a sentence if necessary, in order to make sense. Many languages say, "This is the beginning of the gospel ..."

The word translated "gospel" means "good news". Later it became something like a technical term to describe the books which tell about Jesus' ministry, so that the book of Mark is called a Gospel. However, in this verse it should be given the more general sense of "good news".

"Christ" in some places has a meaning of its own, as in Mark 8.29, where Peter makes his famous statement that Jesus is the Christ. Here in 1.1, however, it is used more as a title, almost as a part of Jesus' name.

This verse tells us at the very beginning of the Gospel that Jesus is "the Son of God". Later God himself (in 1.11 and 9.7) says that Jesus is his Son. But one important theme of the Gospel of Mark is that Jesus does not want people to know that he is God's Son. The evil spirits know it, but Jesus does not want them to declare it openly (see 1.24-25, 1.34, and 3.11-12). Only at the end of the Gospel is it revealed to people that Jesus is the Son of God (see 13.32 and 14.61-62). The first person to fully recognize it seems to be the Roman centurion who saw Jesus die (15.39). The effect of this is that people who read or hear the Gospel of Mark have, right from the beginning, a more complete understanding of Jesus' identity than any of the people in the Gospel do.

1.2 The narrative of the Gospel begins with a quotation from the Old Testament which explains the significance of John the Baptist and his relationship with Jesus. The text says that the quotation is from the prophet Isaiah, but verses 2 and 3 seem to quote both Malachi 3.1 and Isaiah 40.3. The "messenger" who goes ahead refers to John. The one that the messenger goes ahead of is called "you". This "you" is called "the Lord" in verse 3, and clearly refers to Jesus himself.

In Greek there is just one sentence beginning in verse 2 and continuing to the end of verse 4. The point of the sentence is that John the Baptist's appearance (mentioned in verse 4) happened precisely as the prophet had declared long before. There is no need to translate this as one long sentence in other languages, but the connection between John's appearance and the words of the prophet must still be made clear.

A "prophet" is a person who proclaims a message that God has given him.

In the Greek the quotation begins with a word (*idou*) which has the purpose of calling attention to what is being said. In the NRSV this is translated with "See". In many other English versions it has been omitted, because English does not have a word that matches it very closely. If a language has such a word, it can be used here.

The Old Testament prophets often spoke God's words directly to the people, using "I" not to refer to themselves, but to refer to God himself. That is the case here. "I" in this verse refers to God. "My messenger" is God's own messenger.

"Prepare your way" means first "to get ready the road that you will walk on", but it also has a larger sense of getting people ready to welcome you and accept you.

1.3 The messenger mentioned in verse 2 is referred to here as someone who is crying out in the desert or wilderness. The person is not described. We hear only his voice calling out. The message is the same as the message in verse 2, to get the Lord's road ready for him to walk on as he comes to his people.

Hebrew poetry very commonly uses two parallel lines to make a single point. That is what we find here in this quotation from Isaiah. The first line is "Prepare the way of the Lord" and the parallel line is "make his paths straight". If for any reason it is awkward or difficult to translate as two lines, it could be combined into a single statement: "Straighten the paths in order to get them ready for the Lord to walk on."

The "desert" or "wilderness" refers to an important part of the geography of Israel. It is dry, stony country that is mostly uninhabited. For the most part, it does not refer to a sandy desert like the Sahara. There can be a few small trees growing and perhaps even some grass.

"Lord" here translates a Greek word with a wide range of meaning. The basic meaning is "owner" or "master". It was often used simply as a polite way of addressing a man. But it was also used as a title to refer to God, and in the Greek translation of the Old Testament it usually stands for God's name. In the Hebrew of the passage quoted here, God's name is used, so it is best to assume that the word here should be understood as referring to God himself. The translation should be a title that can be used either for God or for Jesus. Preferably the title should imply that God is the one whom we respect and obey.

1.4 Verses 2 and 3 tell us that John's ministry was foretold by the prophets. In verse 4 we meet John himself. He is called "John the Baptist", which means "the one who baptizes people", because this was an important part of his ministry.

The word for "baptize" can be a problem for translators, because it is important to find a word that will be acceptable to all of the churches that will be using the translation, but at the same time each of the churches would like us to use an expression which their members will be familiar with.

In Greek, the description of John's ministry in this verse makes use of one key verb ("preaching") and several key nouns ("baptism", "repentance", "forgiveness", and "sins"). All of these nouns involve activities, and in order to make the meaning clear in other languages it is usually necessary to put the meaning in a form very different from the Greek.

What John preached was that people should turn away ("repent") from the things they were doing which were not God's will ("sins"). John would then baptize these people to show that God had forgiven their sins.

1.5 People became very interested in John's message and they responded to it. John stayed at the Jordan River, where he could baptize the people, and people came to him from Jerusalem and from all over the district of Judea, in which Jerusalem was located.

The Greek text uses a type of speech known as "hyperbole", emphasizing something by making it stronger than it really was. It says that everyone in Jerusalem and Judea went out to hear John, but this is just a way of saying that very many people went. Many languages regularly use hyperbole, but translators need to decide whether or not it is appropriate here in their languages.

It is not clear whether "confessing" their sins means that the people made a public declaration that they had disobeyed God's will and God's laws, or whether it means that they actually gave details of the particular things that they had done which were wrong.

1.6 John was a very distinctive person, both in his clothing and his food. The outer garment that he wore was made out of rough cloth woven from the hair of camels. Note that the text does not say that it was made of camel's skin. The band that he wore around his waist, however, was made of "leather", which was ordinarily made of the skin of cows.

"Locusts" are similar to grasshoppers, and there are types which are eaten in many parts of the world.

"Wild honey" means the honey made by wild bees.

1.7 John's ministry of urging people to do God's will was of course one way of getting people ready for the coming of Jesus. However, John also told people specifically that he was only preparing the way for someone greater who was coming. In order to emphasize how much greater Jesus was, John used an example. The work of bending down and helping to remove someone's shoes was the sort of work that a servant might do for a master. In some cases it might even be considered too low even for a servant to do. John claims that Jesus is so much greater than he is that John is not worthy even to do that sort of low work for Jesus.

John is of course talking about Jesus, but he does not use his name. Sandals could have leather "thongs", which were straps or strings that were tied together to keep the sandal on the foot.

1.8 One of the greatest examples of the difference between John and the person who is coming is in the change they will be able to make in people's lives. John can use only a ceremony involving water as a sign of a change. The person who is coming will be able to give God's own Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to people.

"Holy" when used in the expression "Holy Spirit" means primarily "something connected especially with God." It is correct to translate "Holy Spirit" as "God's Spirit". "Holy" can have other senses in other places, such as "never connected with evil", and if the language has an appropriate term it can be used here. But the primary meaning is simply "God's Spirit", and there is no need to try to find other expressions which may be misleading, such as "clean". The same word "baptize" is used here for both of these events, which may be a problem for some languages. When choosing the ordinary word for "baptize", it might be good to give some thought to how easily it can be extended to this further use.

The Baptism of Jesus, Mark 1.9-11

Section heading: Many of the titles are expressed in English as noun phrases. In other languages it may be better to use a full sentence. Instead of "The Baptism of Jesus" one might say "Jesus is baptized" or "John baptizes Jesus".

1.9 For the first time Jesus appears as a character in the Gospel. Nothing is said in this Gospel about John the Baptist's reaction to Jesus.

"In those days" refers to the period of time when John was carrying out his ministry at the Jordan River.

1.10 Notice that in the Gospel of Mark, the experience reported in verses 10 and 11 seems to be limited to Jesus himself. We are not told that anyone standing by saw or heard anything. The experience seems to be a kind of vision and it describes events that one might expect to see only in visions.

Jesus sees "the heavens" torn apart, like a curtain might be torn apart. The Greek word can refer either to heaven or to the sky. In terms of Jesus' vision, it seems that Jesus saw the sky above him being ripped open so that the Holy Spirit could come through. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, then comes down to Jesus.

1.11 A voice then speaks to Jesus from heaven. The words spoken show that the speaker must be God, but it is better to follow Mark and not say so specifically unless some problem in the language makes it necessary.

The Temptation of Jesus, Mark 1.12-13

1.12 The first thing that the Holy Spirit does is to cause Jesus to go out into the desert or wilderness. The NRSV says that the Spirit "drove Jesus out", because the word used here is also used when Jesus drives out demons and when he drove out the people who were trying to do business inside the temple grounds (Mark 11.15). However, the same word is used in verse 43 in this chapter, when Jesus sends a man on his way, so it does not have to imply great force or anger.

1.13 Mark's Gospel combines many ideas with few words in this verse. But nothing is said about what form the temptation took or how Jesus responded to it.

The animals are mentioned probably to show the wildness of the place that Jesus had gone to. The types of larger animals most likely to be found in that wilderness were hyenas, jackals, foxes, and various kinds of deer and antelope.

In Greek the word for "angel" is the same as the word for "messenger" (as in verse 2). The angels are seen as God's messengers. They are spiritual beings who serve God. Although Jesus mentions angels on various occasions, this verse is the only time that angels appear as characters in the Gospel of Mark (they appear more often in the other gospels and in Acts).

The text says that the angels "served him". It means that they attended to whatever needs he had, as a servant might do. The most likely meaning here is that they brought Jesus food. It is the same word as is used about Peter's mother-in-law in verse 31 of this chapter, and about the women who looked after Jesus' needs in Mark 15.41.

The Beginning of the Galilean ministry, Mark 1.14-15

1.14 Mark seems to assume that the readers already know about the arrest of John the Baptist, and he gives no information about it. He only states that Jesus began his ministry after John's ministry had already been stopped by his arrest. Jesus began his ministry in the district of Galilee, where he had come from, according to verse 9.

Judea and Galilee were the two districts where most of the Jewish people lived, but during Roman times they were ruled separately. At the time of Jesus, Galilee was under the tetrarch (or king) Herod Antipas. Judea was under a governor appointed from Rome.

Jesus' message is summarized as "the gospel of God". This can mean both the good news about God, as explained in the next verse, and the good news that Jesus had received from God.

1.15 Jesus begins his message by saying that "the time is fulfilled". This means that the time God had set to do special things for his people, the time that the people had waited for for so long, has now come.

"The Kingdom of God" refers to the time when God will establish his complete rule and his enemies will be defeated. However, Jesus ministry is the only beginning of this time, and the Kingdom begins so quietly that not everyone can tell that it is there. Jesus in his parables compares it to the way a plant grows. But at the right time, the Kingdom will come with power (see Mark 9.1). An important part of Jesus' ministry is to encourage people to make a decision to "enter the Kingdom of God", that is, to let God be the ruler of their lives.

In this verse, Jesus calls the people to "repent", just as John the Baptist had. To turn away from one's sins is the first step toward entering the Kingdom of God.

Jesus calls the first disciples, Mark 1.16-20

1.16 The body of water called the Sea of Galilee is actually an egg-shaped lake about 20 km from north to south and 10 km from east to west. Although it is often called "Sea" in English, it is better to call it a lake, as TEV and CEV do, and as NRSV also does later in this verse.

Each of the brothers was standing in the water near the shore throwing a casting-net. This is a kind of net which is wound around the arm, and then thrown out in a large circle over the water.

In languages where it is necessary to say who was the older brother, it is probably correct to assume that Simon was older than Andrew.

1.17 Jesus tells the brothers that if they come with him, he will help them to search for people instead of hunting for fish. The idea, of course, is that they will help Jesus to bring people into the Kingdom of God. Translators need to be careful to find a way to translate "make you fishers of men" so that the point Jesus is making is clear, while still keeping the play on words if possible.

1.18 Simon and Andrew "followed" Jesus. This means literally that they came after him as he walked along the shore, but it also means that they became his disciples.

The text does not say what they did with their nets. If they were holding them when they left to follow Jesus, they presumably set them down on the shore. If they had just cast the nets, did they leave them in the sea and go? If this is an issue in a language, translators will have to decide what seems most likely. But the text does say that the brothers responded "immediately" to Jesus' call. There was not time for a long process of hauling in nets.

1.19 The Greek word used for "nets" in this verse is the general word for "net", so it is not possible to know exactly what kind of nets they were. However, they could well have been nets used from boats rather than the casting-nets mentioned in verse 16.

The "boat" was a small fishing boat which used both oars and a sail.

If it is necessary to say which brother was older, it was probably James.

1.20 Verse 19 might suggest that James and John were alone in their boat. In verse 20 we learn that their father Zebedee and some hired workers were also in the boat with them.

The Man with the unclean spirit, Mark 1.21-28

Section heading: As mentioned before, in many languages it is better to make the section headings full sentences. Here one could say "Jesus drives an evil spirit out of a man" or "A man with an evil spirit shouts at Jesus".

1.21 The town of Capernaum, at the northwestern end of Lake Galilee, was apparently Jesus' base when he was in Galilee. Mark 2.1 and 9.33 suggest that there was a house in Capernaum where Jesus usually stayed. This may have been the house mentioned in verse 29. In any case, Jesus led his new disciples to Capernaum.

The "Sabbath" day was Saturday, the day of worship and rest for the Jewish people. (Technically, the day began at sundown on Friday night and ended at sundown on Saturday night.)

On the Sabbath day, the Jewish people would gather in their houses of worship, known as synagogues, to worship. Jesus took this opportunity to "teach" the people, which probably means explaining to them the meaning of a passage of scripture.

1.22 The word "scribes" suggests "writers", but the people referred to were scholars who studied the Jewish scriptures and interpreted them for the people. Perhaps it was the scribes who often taught in the synagogues on the Sabbath day. TEV and NIV call them "teachers of the Law". The "Law" in this case refers to the Law which Moses had given to the people of Israel and which made up the most important part of the Jewish scripture.

Jesus' teaching was very different from the teaching of the scribes, because he spoke powerfully and with great confidence. The people were not used to this kind of teaching, and were amazed by it.

1.23 The text suddenly introduces a man "with an unclean spirit". "Unclean spirit" is an alternative term for "demon" (used in 1.34). It could also be called an "evil spirit".

The idea of possession is that the demon had entered the man's body and taken control of the man, so that when the man spoke, it was actually the demon's words that he was saying.

There are two ways of understanding the text here. TEV and CEV interpret it to mean that this man was not present while Jesus was teaching but suddenly came into the synagogue. REB and NIV suggest that the man had been there all along but suddenly cried out. It is not very clear which of these meanings is intended by NRSV.

1.24 The demon interrupts the synagogue service with his cries. We see here the first example of the knowledge which the spirits had about Jesus, which the other people in the synagogue did not have. The spirit says that it knows that Jesus is "the Holy One of God". The meaning is that Jesus is a person related to God in a unique and special way, appointed and sent by God.

The spirit asks why Jesus is there. Has he come to destroy "us"? "Us" does not refer to the group of people gathered in the synagogue, but to this demon and other demons. However, it should not be necessary to make this clear in most languages.

1.25 Jesus speaks sternly to the demon and orders the demon to stop talking and to come out of the man.

1.26 The spirit obeys Jesus, but as it comes out of the man, it causes the man to have convulsions, as people have when they have epileptic seizures, for example. It also causes the man to cry out loudly as it leaves.

1.27 When Jesus first began teaching, the people had been amazed (verse 22) at the power and authority with which he spoke. Now they have seen Jesus' power and authority expressed in a very dramatic way, to make an evil spirit obey him. The people are even more amazed. They sum it all up as "A new kind of teaching".

1.28 Soon people all over the region of Galilee are talking about the amazing power of Jesus.

Jesus heals many at Simon's house, Mark 1.29-34

1.29 Now we learn that the home of Simon and Andrew is in Capernaum.

1.30 We also learn that Simon is married and that his wife's mother is also at the home. She is in bed, sick with a fever.

We do not know who told Jesus about the sick woman. "They" here is a general word meaning "the people in the house".

1.31 Jesus went to the woman and by holding her hand he helped her to sit up (or possibly, to stand up; translators can say what seems most likely to them). The woman is completely cured and she immediately feels well enough that she can help to look after the needs of the guests.

1.32 Jesus has become popular very quickly, and everyone in the area who is sick or troubled by demons is brought to him to be cured. However, the people had to respect the Sabbath, so they could not come immediately to the house. They had to wait until after the sun went down and the Sabbath day ended.

1.33 Again, we probably have a case of hyperbole when it says "the whole city", although in this case perhaps it was very nearly true!

1.34 The demons know who Jesus really is, and in Jesus' first encounter with a demon in verses 23-26, the demon said things which Jesus did not want the people to hear. Probably he felt that the people would not understand, and it would only confuse them. So here, when Jesus sees someone possessed by a demon, he does not allow the demon to speak.

A Preaching tour in Galilee, Mark 1.35-39

1.35 Jesus is so popular that in order to get away by himself he has to get up early in the morning while it is still dark.

1.36 We are not told who Simon's companions are; however, by the way that Jesus speaks to them in verse 38, they are probably the other new disciples.

1.37 It seems that Jesus was right to get up so early. Not long afterwards, "Everyone is searching for" him.

1.38 Jesus explains the goal of his ministry. He cannot spend all his time in Capernaum. He must proclaim his message in other towns as well.

The Greek has literally "That is what I came out to do." Some scholars think Jesus means that he came out of Capernaum that morning with this plan in mind. Others feel that he is speaking more generally, meaning something like, "That is the reason that I started out on this ministry of mine."

1.39 The pattern that we saw first in Capernaum in verses 21-26 is repeated in the other towns of Galilee (though we should not assume that Jesus had to drive out a demon every time he taught in a synagogue). It is interesting that this verse suggests that Jesus taught mainly in the synagogues (at least at the beginning of his ministry).

Jesus cleanses a leper, Mark 1.40-45

1.40 The sickness called leprosy is known in many countries. People who have the sickness are sometimes called "lepers". However, medical experts question whether the modern disease known as leprosy is the same as this disease mentioned in the Bible. Because of that problem, the word is often translated more generally as "a terrible skin disease" or something of that sort.

For the Jewish people, this disease made them religiously "unclean". They could not participate in worship or in other social activities. They could not even go near other people, for fear of making those people also unclean. However, if they could prove to the priests that they were healed of the disease, they could go through certain rituals and become "clean" again.

The leper in this story seems to have no doubts about Jesus' power to cure him. But he is not sure whether Jesus will want to get involved with a social outcast like he is.

1.41 In most cultures, it will not seem surprising that Jesus touched the man, but in the context of Jewish culture, this was an amazing act which would ordinarily have made Jesus himself unclean. Even to touch a leper by mistake would be a terrible thing for a Jewish person of that time; but Jesus does it intentionally. However, it is clear that if Jesus has the power to heal the disease, his power is greater also than the uncleanness of the disease.

The verse also reports Jesus' emotional response to the leper's request. Jesus was "moved with pity", that is, he felt very sorry for the man. This probably refers both to the fact that Jesus was aware of the terrible consequences for anyone in Jewish culture who had this sickness, and also to Jesus' response to the faith that the man himself has shown in verse 40.

In verse 40 the man asks Jesus to make him clean, and when Jesus speaks to heal the man, he says, "Be clean!" The uncleanness of the disease seems more in focus than the disease itself. However, this may be a problem in some languages. If it is, a translator can use "be healed" instead.

1.42 This verse mentions both the healing from the disease and the fact that once the disease was gone, the man was immediately ritually clean. However, although this was technically true, it was still necessary for the man to have it confirmed by a priest before he could begin to live normally again.

1.43-44 The next step for the man is to have his skin inspected by a priest. If the priest declares him clean again, then there are certain sacrifices that the man must make. The details about these sacrifices are given in the Law that Moses had given to the people of Israel hundreds of years earlier, and are recorded in Leviticus 14.1-32. The man makes these sacrifices "as a testimony" or proof, to show the rest of the people that he is now well and clean.

The "priests" were the men who were in charge of the religious and ritual life of the people of Israel. The priests came from certain families only. The main responsibilities of the priests were carried out at the temple in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was the only place where sacrifices could be made. So Jesus is apparently sending the man to Jerusalem.

However, in addition to his concern for the man, Jesus has a personal concern, as well. He does not want the man to tell everyone that Jesus has healed him, presumably because this will further interfere with Jesus' ministry of proclaiming the good news. Jesus speaks quite strongly to the man about this, insisting that the man should go at once to the priest, and not spend any time telling people about his healing first.

1.45 However, in spite of Jesus' strong warning, the man did not obey. On the contrary, he went everywhere enthusiastically telling people about Jesus' power. This made people so anxious to see

Jesus that it became impossible for him to go openly into the towns. But even when he stayed out in the countryside, people still came to him from everywhere.

"Openly" suggests that Jesus might sometimes go into a town when people did not know about it, just as he had managed to get away from everyone for a short time in verse 35.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

Practice Passage Four

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

JOHN CHAPTER NINE

Introduction:

Chapter 9 of John's Gospel reports a particular incident in Jesus' life. The main characters in the story are Jesus himself, a man who was born blind but who Jesus helps to be able to see, and the Pharisees. Other characters are Jesus' disciples, the blind man's parents, and other people who knew the blind man when he was still blind.

The story uses a lot of dialogue or direct speech, which shows a variety of different emotions. Translators need to be clearly aware of the particular feelings or emotions behind each speech so that these can be brought out in the most effective way in the translation.

The terms "blind" and "able to see" are important terms in this passage. They have the literal sense of being able (or not) to use one's eyes. But they also have a deeper sense, of being able (or not) to recognize spiritual truth.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first, 9.1-12, tells the story of the man's healing and people's reactions. The second section, 9.13-34, tells about the Pharisees' reactions to the healing. The final section, 9.35-41 explains some of the spiritual significance of "seeing" and "being blind". Section headings are provided for these sections, but translators should give each section a heading that will be most helpful for the readers in their own languages.

Jesus heals a man born blind 9.1-12

This first section of the chapter has three parts, which could be printed as three paragraphs. Verses 1-5 show Jesus talking to his disciples, verses 6-7 show Jesus' healing of the blind man, and verses 8-12 show the response of other people to the healing.

9.1 The more literal versions begin this passage with "As he walked along, he saw ..." "He" of course refers to Jesus. One important principle of translation is that different languages have different rules for referring to the characters in a narrative, sometimes using nouns and sometimes using pronouns. Therefore, translators can ordinarily feel free to change pronouns to nouns (and vice versa) if it will be better in their language. This verse is a good example. In most languages, it is better not to use the pronoun here. Instead, translators should use the name "Jesus", because many readers will begin reading the passage at this point and it is important to make clear at the beginning who the story is talking about.

This story takes place in Jerusalem. Jesus is walking somewhere in the city.

"Blind from birth" means that when the man was born he was blind. Throughout his whole life, the man had never been able to see.

9.2 Jesus' disciples assume that blindness must be a punishment from God for someone's sin. Jesus' answer in verse 3 shows that this is not necessarily true. The way the disciples word their question to Jesus shows what they assume. They do not ask whether it was someone's sin that caused the man to be blind. They think they already know the answer to that question. Their question is, who was at fault, the man or his parents?

Apparently Jesus' disciples called him "Rabbi", a Hebrew word meaning "Teacher". This word is commonly used today by Jews to refer to the religious leaders of their community, and because of this many English speakers know the word. Therefore it is acceptable to use "Rabbi" in English translations. Translators in other languages should use a word with the correct meaning that their readers will understand.

Jesus "disciples" were people who traveled around with him, relating to him as students relate to a master teacher. This type of relationship is known in most cultures (although it does not always involved traveling around from place to place), so it should not be difficult to find a good expression to translate "disciples".

9.3 Why was the man born blind? Jesus says that it happened so that people will be able to look at what happens to this man and see God at work. Probably this is a reference to the healing which is about to take place, both physically and spiritually.

The verse begins literally, "neither he sinned nor his parents". But Jesus is not saying that none of these people have ever sinned. He is answering the question about why the man is blind. Translate carefully to bring out the right meaning. Perhaps, "He is blind, not because of his sin or his parents' sin." or "The reason for his blindness is so that God's power can be seen at work in him. It is not because of his sin or his parents' sin."

The idea of God's works being revealed is expressed in Greek in the passive, without stating who the actor is. In some languages this idea can be expressed as "in order that through him people can see God's power." However, in other languages it may be necessary to make God the actor: "so that through him God can show people the kind of work he does."

9.4 In verses 4 and 5, Jesus moves from the disciples' view of the situation to his own. He gives the theological background necessary to understand the miracle he is about to perform.

"Day" and "night" are used here in a figurative sense. "Day" refers to the time of Jesus' ministry, "night" to the time when Jesus' enemies will temporarily stop his work. However, it should not be necessary in most languages to explain the meaning in the translation. It should usually be possible to use the same figurative language that Jesus used.

"Him who sent me" is of course God himself. In some languages it may be necessary to make this clear and say "God, who sent me".

"We" may be people in general, or Jesus and his disciples. It includes the people spoken to.

9.5 In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes a number of statements which reveal who he truly is. These statements begin with "I am".

In John 8.12 Jesus has already said, "I am the light of the world", and this verse refers back to that statement. "Light" means "the light which gives light to the world, making people able to see clearly." However, as with "day" and "night" in verse 4, the meaning is primarily spiritual rather than physical (for the blind man in this story, it is both).

Jesus uses the word "world" twice in this verse. In the first case ("while I am in the world"), "world" refers to the earth as a place. In the second use ("I am the light of the world") "world" is more figurative, and refers mainly to the people of the world. It can be translated, "I am the light for the people of the world."

9.6 Jesus' actions in this verse are probably clear enough. Apparently Jesus crouched down, either before or after he spit on the ground. With his finger he must have mixed the saliva with some dust, making a small amount of mud. Presumably he then used his finger to take some of this mud, stood up again, and with his finger spread this mud on the blind man's eyes. Many of these

actions of Jesus are only implicit in the Greek (and in the English translations), but it may be necessary to make one or more of them explicit in some languages (such as the fact that Jesus crouched down to make the mud, or that he used his finger to stir the mud).

9.7 Since the man's eyelids were now covered with mud, the man needed to wash his eyes. Jesus tells him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. This was one of the reservoirs in Jerusalem where people could go to get water. It was in the southeastern end of the city. The pool was probably cut out of the bedrock, perhaps with steps going down to the level of the water.

The note that "Siloam means sent" is added by the author of the book; it is not part of Jesus' words. Some scholars think that the author considers this name especially significant, maybe referring to Jesus as the one "sent" by God. But it is not really clear why the author added this note. Several of the English translations put these words in parentheses, and this might be a good model in other languages, as well.

The verse tells us that the blind man followed Jesus' instructions, and as he returned from the Pool of Siloam he was already able to see.

9.8 We have to assume that people could tell by looking at the man that he was no longer blind. Perhaps his eyelids had originally been permanently closed and now they were open. Or perhaps it was just that he was now able to walk around on his own without help from others.

Note that this is the first time we learn that the blind man used to sit by the roadside and beg. No doubt that was what he was doing when Jesus first saw him in verse 1.

There are two groups of people mentioned who ask about this man. First, there are the people who lived near the blind man (his "neighbors"), and who therefore were used to seeing him every day. Second, there are other people who often passed the place on the road where the blind man sat begging, and who recognized him because of that.

9.9 There are three different speakers (or groups of speakers) mentioned in this verse: two groups of people who talk about the man, and then the man himself.

Most translations make it sound as though these questions were asked and answered only once. However, the Greek can also be understood to mean that the questions and answers were repeated a number of times, when different people saw the man. This is the meaning behind NRSV's "were saying" in verse 9 and "kept saying" and "kept asking" in verses 9 and 10.

9.10 The Greek literally says, "How were your eyes opened?" The meaning is, "What happened so that you are now able to see?"

9.11 "The man called Jesus" is a way of referring to a person that the blind man believes the other people have heard of. The meaning is "that person you know about, the one that people call Jesus ..."

NRSV says "I ... received my sight", which seems to imply that someone gave it to him. There is no implication of this sort in the Greek, and it is better just to say something like "and then I could see" (NIV) or "I ... found I could see" (REB).

9.12 Notice that the blind man has not had any contact with Jesus since he was healed. It is not very clear why the people ask the man where Jesus is. But in terms of the whole story, it helps to show the growing spiritual awareness of the man. Here, he can only say, "I do not know." By the end of the chapter he is making important theological points, and finding faith in Jesus.

The Pharisees investigate the healing 9.13-34

This long middle section of the story has three main parts. Verses 13-17 show the Pharisees questioning the man who had been healed, verses 18-23 show the Pharisees (or Jewish leaders) questioning the man's parents, and in verses 24-34 the Pharisees (Jewish leaders) question the man a second time.

9.13 The Pharisees were members of a Jewish group that tried to strictly obey the religious laws of their people. We do not know why the people took the man to see the Pharisees.

Since "Pharisee" is a name, many translators transliterate the name into the sounds of their own language. However, it is often good to use a term together with "Pharisee" to give readers an idea of who they were. For example, "men from the religious group Farisi" or "Religious leaders called Farisi".

9.14 Only now we are told that the day when Jesus healed the man was a Sabbath day, when Jewish people were not supposed to do most kinds of work. Strict Jews like the Pharisees believed that healing people was a kind of work. So if Jesus healed people on the Sabbath, they felt that he was breaking their laws about not working on the Sabbath.

The Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown Friday evening and ends at sundown on Saturday. So it is mainly the same as Saturday. Possible translations are "Day of Rest" and "Jewish Holy Day". It should be translated in a way different from the usual translation for Sunday, the Christian day of worship.

The way the story is told, it sounds as though it all happens shortly after the man was healed, in which case it would still be Sabbath. However, it is a surprising amount of activity to take place on the Sabbath, so it is possible that we are meant to understand that this was a day or so later.

9.15 Notice that the man's explanation of his healing is much shorter here than in verse 11. However, it may be that his words here in verse 15 are meant to be only a summary of what he actually said. In the Greek the man does not mention Jesus' name when he talks to the Pharisees, but in verses 16-17 we see that they know exactly who he is talking about. So perhaps it is assumed that the people who brought the man already told the Pharisees that he had been healed by Jesus. Either way, translators can say "Jesus put some mud on my eyes" if it is better in some languages to make clear who the man is talking about.

9.16 The Pharisees look at different actions of Jesus and draw different conclusions. Since Jesus heals people on the Sabbath, some Pharisees believe that God cannot have sent him. But other Pharisees argue that a person who is not doing God's will could not do the great miracles that they see Jesus doing.

A person who does not follow God's laws and who intentionally breaks the Sabbath would be considered a "sinner". The first group of Pharisees do not use the word, but they are basically saying that Jesus is a sinner. So when the second group respond, they are challenging the main point that the first group was making. They are saying, basically, "But if you are right, and the man really is a sinner, then how is it possible for him to do such miracles?" Notice that they use the word in the plural. They seem to be thinking of other miracles as well as the healing of the blind man.

The primary meaning of the word translated "signs" or "miracles" in this verse is "amazing acts", but in the Gospel of John it has the extra sense of "miracles which reveal the power of God".

The verse ends by saying that there was a disagreement among the Pharisees, or (as REB puts it), "they took different sides."

9.17 Since the Pharisees cannot agree, they decide to ask the man who was healed for his opinion about Jesus. They ask him and the man answers that Jesus is a prophet. A prophet is a person sent by God with a particular mission. It might be translated as "God's spokesman".

Notice how the man's faith and understanding grow through the course of the story while the Pharisees become more stubborn (see verses 39-41).

9.18 For those who cannot believe that Jesus was sent by God, perhaps there is another way out. Perhaps (they think) this was not such a great miracle after all. Maybe the man was not really born blind! They send for his parents in order to find out.

This verse refers to "the Jews". Of course Jesus himself and all of the other people in this story are Jews, so the term "the Jews" here probably refers to the Pharisees as leaders of the Jews. Notice the TEV and CEV translations, the "Jewish authorities" and "the Jewish leaders."

9.19 The question the Pharisees ask the man's parents seems a bit strange, since it includes a reference to what the parents' say about their son, when as far as we know they have said nothing. The idea behind this is that the information about the man being born blind must originally have come from the man's parents, not from the man himself. Translators should word the Pharisees' question so that it gives the right meaning. In some languages it might be better to leave "you say" implicit: "This is your son, right? We hear that he was born blind. If that is true, how is it that now he is able to see?"

In verse 19 (and also verse 20 in NIV and NRSV), "this" suggests that the son is there listening to the discussion. However, verse 24 suggests that the son was not with them and had to be called back when the leaders wanted to talk to him again. Perhaps the simplest solution to this problem is to assume that the son is somewhere nearby, where he can be seen, but perhaps not near enough to hear the conversation with the parents. Translators should imagine a situation something like this in order to choose the most appropriate word in their language for "this".

9.20-21 The story has been moving so fast that we (the readers) are not even sure if the man's parents have had time yet to learn about their son's healing. Their answer here seems quite believable.

We are not told how old the man is, but he is clearly an adult, able to be responsible for himself. This is what the parents mean by "he is of age". It might be translated as "he is an adult" or "he is already grown up" or "he is no longer a child".

9.22-23 We now learn that the parents actually knew the truth, but were afraid to say it. The Jewish leaders were opposed to Jesus and they had warned people that if they accepted the claims about Jesus, they would not be allowed to participate in the religious ceremonies.

"Christ" or "Messiah" in this verse does not refer to Jesus himself. It refers to the person that the Jewish people were waiting for God to send to them, the ruler who would bring about the rule of God promised by the prophets of old. The word "Messiah" is used in English with approximately this meaning, so some English translations use "Messiah" here. To find a term in other languages the key components are 1) a person who will rule the people, 2) his rule will be a time of peace and righteousness, 3) his coming has been promised by God from long before (so that everyone is waiting for him to come). An expression like "the king that God promised to send" is one way of trying to include these ideas.

The point then, is that the Jews were waiting for appearance of the Messiah, the promised king (called "Christ" in Greek). Many people were saying that Jesus must be the Messiah, but the

leaders did not accept this, and made their threats against anyone who said that they believed Jesus was the Messiah.

"Synagogue" refers to the local meeting place and place of worship of the Jewish people. To be "put out of the synagogue" or "expelled from the synagogue" means to not be allowed to join with other people for religious ceremonies. Since Jewish life was centered around their worship, this was a strong form of social control.

Verse 22 tells us that the blind man's parents were afraid to say that Jesus had healed the man, because the leaders might take this as expressing belief in Jesus as the Christ, and put them out of the synagogue.

9.24 Now the leaders want to speak again to the man who had been blind, and they call him to come. They say to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." (NRSV) "This man" of course is Jesus. This is a very misleading translation, since it sounds as though the leaders are praising God because Jesus is a sinner. That is not what the text means. Even though the parents have supported the claims for the miracle (by making clear that their son really was born blind), the leaders still cannot accept what has happened. What their words mean is something like this: "We know that Jesus is a sinner, so he could not have done what you claim he has done. You are not telling the truth. Take a strong oath and tell us the truth this time."

"Give glory to God" is an expression meaning "Swear before God to tell the truth." Translators should translate in a way to make this clear, as TEV ("Promise before God that you will tell the truth!") and REB ("Speak the truth before God.") have done.

When the Pharisees call Jesus "this man" they are not speaking very respectfully about him. Translators should try to show this in their own languages.

9.25 The man does not try to argue with them. In his answer he simply states what he knows and what he does not know. He does not even claim here that Jesus is the one who healed him.

9.26 Why do the Jewish leaders ask the man this question again? Maybe they are grasping at straws, hoping perhaps to find some evidence that Jesus used evil powers when healing the man?

9.27 The man seems to be getting upset with the leaders because of all their questions. He knows very well that the leaders do not want to become Jesus' disciples. No doubt he asks this rhetorical question knowing that it will annoy them, just because he himself is upset at them. Different languages will have a variety of ways to express this question: "Do you mean to say that you also want to become his disciples?" "Are you asking because you want to become his disciples, too?"

"Disciple" is used in two senses. As mentioned in verse 2, it can refer to the group of people who traveled around with Jesus and who were his close associates. It can also refer more generally to people who listened to Jesus and believed in him. It does not necessarily imply traveling around with him.

There were many people who were disciples of Jesus in this second sense. When the blind man asks "do you, too, want to become his disciples?", it is best to assume that he is referring to all of these other people who are Jesus' disciples. He is not implying that he himself is a disciple of Jesus.

9.28 Note that the Pharisees do not assume that the man has just said he was Jesus' disciple. Instead, upset by his words, they throw it back at him as an accusation. The man has already told them that he thinks Jesus is a prophet, so in a sense they have a right to accuse him of being Jesus' disciple.

NIV and TEV apparently understand the Greek "that one" as a somewhat insulting way to refer to Jesus, and they translate it as that "fellow".

Moses was the person through whom God gave the Law to the people of Israel. The Pharisees say that they are Moses' disciples because they try to carefully obey all of God's laws, in the way that Moses wanted all of the people of Israel to do.

The text says that the Pharisees "reviled" or "insulted" the man and said these things. The meaning is probably that the things that the Pharisees said to the man (in verses 28 and 29) were meant by them to be insulting. It probably does not mean that they said other insulting things to him as well.

9.29 God had spoken to Moses, and through Moses God had given the people of Israel all of the laws that they were faithfully trying to follow. But these leaders cannot believe that God has spoken to Jesus, who has caused so much trouble for them.

It is not clear precisely what they mean when they say "We do not know where he comes from." But the significance of what they say is, "There is nothing to make us believe that God has sent this man Jesus." However, the book of John has already made very clear that Jesus did come from God. Jesus had just mentioned it again when speaking to his disciples in 9.4, for example. For readers of John, therefore, the leaders are actually condemning themselves when they admit that they do not know this important point that they should have known.

9.30-33 The leaders' unreasonable attitude to Jesus has in fact blinded them. But as the beggar hears what they say, he sees how wrong they are and he recognizes some important truths. He is a person who has almost certainly had no education. As a beggar, he would be one of the lowest people in society. But the truth of the situation is so obvious to him, and the things that the leaders are saying are so ridiculous, that the man cannot help but point out the things that he feels should be obvious to anyone.

In verse 30, the man seems to understand the leaders' comment that they do not know where Jesus comes from as meaning that they do not know whether Jesus was sent from God or not. His arguments are therefore trying to show that Jesus must have come from God or he would not have been able to cure him of his blindness.

9.30 The man's opening words "This is an amazing thing" are very sarcastic. He is essentially criticizing the Pharisees for their blindness to the facts. It is obvious to the man that Jesus comes from God, in the sense of being sent from God. Therefore he throws the leaders' words back at them, as a way of increasing the sarcasm of his words.

9.31 It is interesting to note that the assumption that the man makes here is the same as the argument some of the Pharisees themselves used in verse 16.

9.33 Here the man comes to the main point, and tells the leaders that it is obvious that Jesus must have been sent by God.

9.34 The man's words have made the leaders very angry, and they respond very strongly. They use a rhetorical question to point out that from their point of view he is utterly unfit to try to talk theology with them.

The leaders say that the man was "born and brought up in sin", following the same assumptions that the disciples made in verse 2. They assume that if someone was born blind, it must be a punishment for sin. (But we the readers know what Jesus said in verse 3, so we know their assumption is wrong.)

"They threw him out" (NIV) may mean that they told him strongly to go away from them. Or it could be a reference to something more formal, such as was referred to in verse 22, excluding him from being able to participate in worship or other community activities. If it has the first meaning, it would seem to imply that the events of this day were taking place inside a building of some kind. However, in the context of this chapter (especially the warning in verse 22 and Jesus' concerned reaction in verse 35), the second meaning seems more likely, as CEV and TEV make clear.

Spiritual blindness 6.35-41

9.35 Jesus has not been an active part of the story since verse 7. Now he hears about what has happened to the man and he comes looking for him.

"Son of Man" is the term Jesus often used to refer to himself. As it has been used in the Gospel of John up to this point, it refers to someone who has come from God and who gives eternal life to people. This person has also been given the authority to be the judge of people on the Last Day. Whatever expression is used in a language for this title "Son of Man", it should have a meaning something like, "someone who is truly human". Translators often translate this expression very literally, without thinking carefully about the meaning it will have in their languages. In some languages it means nothing more than "Some man's son", but sometimes it can have other unfortunate meanings. Be careful!

"Believe in the Son of Man" is a rather unusual expression, but the meaning is probably "believe that the person known as the Son of Man has come from God and can provide you with God's salvation".

9.36 Sometimes translators want to translate "Son of Man" in a way that makes it clearly refer to Jesus, using terms such as "I, the Son of Man." That approach certainly cannot be used in this passage, because this verse shows us that the man cannot tell from Jesus' words who it is that Jesus is talking about.

However, we see that the man is very ready to do whatever Jesus wants him to do. If Jesus thinks he should believe in the Son of Man, he will do it!

9.37 Even here, when Jesus makes clear that he is referring to himself, he still continues to refer to himself in the third person. This may be difficult in some languages, but it is good to follow Jesus' way of expressing himself as long as it is understandable and not misleading.

So far as we know from the story, the man had never seen Jesus until this time when Jesus came and found him. Earlier, he was still blind when he obeyed Jesus and went away to wash his eyes. The NIV has the right sense in English: "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

9.38 The man's response shows that he accepts Jesus as God, worthy of worship. That is what "believe" means to him. "Worship" includes this idea, but it also indicates the physical action of bowing down before Jesus.

In Greek, the man addresses Jesus by the same term, "*kurie*" in both verse 36 and verse 38. However, in verse 36, he does not yet know who Jesus is talking about. In that verse "*kurie*" is just a polite term, like "sir". However, in verse 38, where the man is worshipping Jesus, the term should be translated as an expression of belief, "Lord".

The basic meaning of "Lord" is "owner" or "master". The term used here should be a title that can be used either for God or for Jesus. Preferably the title should imply that this "Lord" is the one whom we respect and obey.

9.39 Jesus draws a conclusion about this whole event, connecting it with the reason God has sent him to the world. Jesus causes people to reveal their true selves. This is the basic meaning of "judgment" here. The former blind man is now not only able to see physically, but his spiritual eyes have also been opened by his experiences.

On the other hand, we have seen that the people who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the people have been moving in the opposite direction. In verses 16-17 some of the Pharisees were still able to "see" spiritually, giving the right interpretation of Jesus, and being willing to listen to the blind man's opinion. But by verses 24-34, all of the leaders are presented as following the wrong interpretation. They have "become blind".

9.40 The Pharisees' question is a rhetorical question. The way it is asked shows that they believe the answer is "No". They believe that they are not "blind".

9.41 "If you were blind" is used figuratively. It means "spiritually blind" in the sense of "unable to tell the difference between right and wrong". A person in that condition would not be guilty, because they would not be consciously disobeying God.

However, the Pharisees have shown by their question in verse 40 that they believe they are able to see. If that is true, then of course they are responsible for their actions. They are guilty of opposing the person God has sent.

It is good for a translator to have a clear understanding of the underlying sense of Jesus' words. However, as much as possible the translation should use the same kind of figurative language that Jesus himself uses, leaving it to the reader to understand the underlying meaning. The translator, however, must be careful to choose terms and sentences which can have the correct meaning and which do not lead the reader in the wrong direction.

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to **Detailed** Table of Contents\]](#)

Practice Passage Five

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

PAUL'S LETTER TO PHILEMON

Introduction.

Paul wrote this letter from a place of his confinement. The letter is addressed to Philemon who was a prominent Christian. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus who ran away from him. Onesimus came in contact with Paul, and he became a Christian. Paul wanted Onesimus to return to his master. So he sent Onesimus back to Philemon carrying a letter from Paul to Philemon asking him to accept back his former slave. As far as we can observe, Paul had a two-fold intention in sending this letter, (1) Onesimus, as a Christian should return to his master, and (2) as a Christian leader, Philemon should forgive and accept him back.

Outline.

The books of Philemon can be divided into five paragraphs:

Verses

- 1-3 Opening greetings sent by Paul to Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus, and to the congregation meeting in Philemon's house.
- 4-7 Paul expresses his appreciation for Philemon's demonstration of love and faith.
- 8-16 Paul makes an appeal on behalf of Onesimus.
- 17-22 Paul reiterates and restates his appeal.
- 23-25 Concluding greetings.

Verse 1 *Paul, a Prisoner of Christ Jesus.* As a believer in Christ, Paul was actively involved in preaching the Gospel to others. For this reason he became a prisoner. It is not clear if he was put in jail or under house arrest. Many commentaries and translations seem to indicate that he was in jail. Whatever it is, it was because of his faith in Christ and his personal involvement in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others that Paul was made a prisoner.

and Timothy our brother. "Brother" here means "brother in the faith" or "fellow believer in Christ," not member of the same family. The possessive pronoun "our" is not in the Greek. Languages that do not require the pronoun "our" can simply omit. If "our" is to be used, it should be inclusive.

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker. From Paul's own statement in verse 2 below, we know that Philemon was a leader of a Church that met in his house. This may be one reason he was called a "co- worker."

Verse 2 *to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house.* "Sister" here does not mean refer to blood relation, but "sister in faith" or "fellow believer in Christ," and in some languages it may be necessary to make this clarification. Again the pronoun "our" is inclusive.

Our fellow soldier. The word "soldier" is metaphorically used to refer to someone who fights for the cause of the Gospel. If a literal rendering is misleading, one could use a simile, "who is like a soldier."

Church in your house refers to a Church meeting or worship service that takes place in Philemon's house. In some languages it may be necessary to mention that the reference here is to a "worship service" and not "Church building."

Verse 3 *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This is characteristic of Paul's salutatory format. If necessary, the format can be changed in a form or manner that will sound more natural to a receptor language. See examples in TEV and CEV. The words, "grace" and "peace" occur again and again in Pauline Letters, as well as in other passages in the Bible. The word "grace" refers to undeserved goodness or kindness from God. "Peace" generally refers to, a state of well being. It is important to note that both grace and peace come from God.

Verse 4 *When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God.* In the Greetings (vv 1-3) Paul uses first person plural (our brother, our sister etc.), but beginning with this verse he uses first person singular. NRSV opens the verse with "when," but translators may prefer other alternatives such as "whenever" or "always" or "every time" (see RSV and TEV). The phrase "I remember you in my prayers" simply means "I pray for you." "You" here is singular and refers to Philemon.

Verse 5 *because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus.* The phrase "I hear of your love ..." indicates that Paul was aware of Philemon's ministry among his fellow believers. There are three key words or concepts in this verse: love, saints, and faith. "Love" in this context is charitable love. Some languages may have more than one concept of love, and it is important that a right word is used. "Saint" simply means "God's people" or "people dedicated to God." In some languages the concept of "saint" is not used for human beings, and translators have to find words that are equivalent to the meaning of this word. "Faith" refers to one's complete trust and commitment, and is much deeper than the idea of belief.

Verse 6 *I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ.* This is the most complicated verse in the letter. The phrase "the sharing of your faith," literally the "fellowship of your faith," is a difficult construction. Philemon was a loving and caring kind of person, and Paul ascribed this to his (Philemon's) faith in Christ. There are several options for interpretation reflected in various English translations. Translators are encouraged to select an interpretation that is more widely accepted. TEV renders the phrase as "our fellowship with you as believers." The phrase "our fellowship with you" refers to Paul's and Timothy's fellowship with Philemon. "As believers" emphasizes that this fellowship is based on their faith in Christ. In some languages it may be necessary to expand to "as fellow believers in Christ."

may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. This part of the verse is also very difficult. If we follow the NRSV rendering this clause means that faith in Christ is the source of motivation that leads to action. Paul reminds Philemon that doing something good to fellow believers is as good as doing something good for Christ himself. However, other translations understand these words quite differently. They tend to understand this as the good things that Christ did for us.

Verse 7 *I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.* "Your love" means Philemon's love for his fellow believers. There are three things we need to take note of in this verse. They are, Philemon's love for his fellow believers (saints), what that meant to them (have been refreshed), and finally what it meant to Paul himself (I have derived much joy and comfort). The key word in this verse is "love." The demonstration of Philemon's love has been a source of blessing and strength to other believers, and that in turn gave Paul "joy" and "comfort" while he was in prison. One of the possible meanings of the word "comfort" in this context is "encouragement."

Verses 8-17

These verses demonstrate Paul's strategy of handling a sensitive issue, the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. The actual request that Paul makes does not appear until verse 17. Because of the strategy Paul employs in these verses there are many incomplete sentences and interrupted thoughts that make translation a challenge.

Verses 8-9 *For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love--and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus.* Paul feels that his status gives him the right to command Philemon to do certain things. He, however, chooses a better way by making an appeal to him in a spirit of love. The phrase "For this reason," referring back to verse 7 and the joy and encouragement he has received. He makes this appeal (1) "as an old man/" ambassador" and (2) "as a prisoner of Christ Jesus." The Greek word rendered in the NRSV as "an old man" is *presbutes* which literally means "an elderly person" or "a senior person." Other translations (including RSV and TEV) render *presbutes* as "ambassador" taking it as variant spelling of *presbeutes*. This seems to be too weak an argument to warrant such a change. Furthermore, in cultures where seniority or being older is not only revered as a position of respect and dignity but also an authority, retaining this word would make perfect sense. This, of course, suggests that Paul was older than Philemon.

Verse 10 *I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment.* Here Paul begins an appeal on behalf of Onesimus. In some languages it may be necessary to substitute "my child" with a simile, "like a son to me" or "like my own son" or "my spiritual son." The same thing could also apply to the word "father."

Verse 11 *Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me.* There may be a play on the meaning of the name Onesimus, "profitable" or "beneficial" or "useful," but whether that was Paul's intention is hard to say. (The noun *onesis* "profit" comes from the verb *oninemi* "to profit, benefit," which occurs in verse 20). It is clear, of course, that Paul's emphasis is on the change that took place in Onesimus' life. It is difficult to determine whether the verb "useless" in this verse refers to the time before or only after Onesimus ran away from Philemon. In the context of Paul's argument, it is more likely that Onesimus was considered useless only after he ran away. A slave who ran away became useless to the owner.

Verse 12 *I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you.* The phrase "my own heart" is in apposition to "him," that is Onesimus. Paul's intention is clear. He was trying to persuade Philemon to accept Onesimus back. Paul knew that Philemon would be very happy to receive him (Paul) to his home, and by the same token he wanted him (Philemon) to accept back his slave, Onesimus. That's the greatest desire Paul had at that moment, for in sending Onesimus to Philemon, he is sending his deepest interests. A literal translation of the phrase "my own heart" may not mean anything in some languages. Translators have their choice of using idiomatic expressions available in their respective languages, or they may have to explain the meaning in plain language.

Verses 13-14 *I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel, but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced.*

Paul's personal preference would be to keep Onesimus with him, but this is something he would not do, and it is important this is made clear in translation. Paul acknowledges that Philemon alone has the rightful authority to decide about Onesimus' future. For Paul, Onesimus remains Philemon's legal slave. Therefore, even if he were to make use of Onesimus's service, he would prefer to do only with Philemon's permission. The phrase, "in your place" suggests that Paul wanted Onesimus to fulfill what Philemon himself would have liked to do if he were physically present with him in prison. In some languages it may be necessary to make this point explicit.

Verses 15 -16 *Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave a beloved brother--especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.* Paul then gives his interpretation on the whole episode. It is true, so the text suggests, that Onesimus ran away from his master on his own will. However, the passive expression “he was separated,” suggests that something else too was at work in this incident. There was something lacking in the relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. With Onesimus’ return back to his master, and with a new dimension to their relationship, God’s plan was fulfilled. In some languages it may be necessary to make this explicit. By using the Greek word “perhaps” (*tacha*) Paul shows that this is one way of understanding the event. Different languages may have different ways of making this point. The phrase “for a while,” though simple, calls for attention, as any rendering of it should not suggest a definite length of time. The word “forever” in this context simply means “for good” or “permanently.”

No longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother – suggests a new relationship between Philemon and Onesimus. Paul’s intention here is not that Philemon should set Onesimus free. The text makes it very clear that Paul wants Onesimus to return to Philemon, and pleads with the latter to accept the former back. This time though, Paul wants Philemon to consider Onesimus not merely as his slave but as his “beloved brother.” In other words, their new relationship is higher than that of a master-slave relationship. In some languages, it may be necessary to expand the phrase “as a beloved brother,” to, for example, “a dear brother in the Lord” (TEV). The concept of slavery may not exist in some languages, or even if it does exist, the concept may be different from that found in the Greco-Roman world. This will be an added problem translators have to confront. Translators have to understand the concept in which the word “slave” is used in the biblical text.

especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. This refers back to the phrase “a beloved brother.” To Paul, Onesimus is a beloved brother in the Lord. To Philemon, Onesimus has double identity, as a slave (in the flesh) and as a fellow believer (in the Lord). This statement affirms that upon his return, Onesimus would still be Philemon’s slave.

Verse 17 *So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me.* In some languages it may not be possible to render conditional clauses meaningfully. Other alternatives are to use “because” or a rhetorical question. Paul stresses the fact that he and Philemon are partners. Partner here means “co-worker.” So, in the spirit of partnership he appeals to Philemon to accommodate his request to welcome back Onesimus and to treat him as he would have treated Paul himself.

Verse 18 *If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account.* It is common for runaway slaves to leave with valuables or money stolen from their master’s household. This could be at the background of Paul’s expression of doubt in this verse. It is clear, however, that Paul does not imply that Onesimus had committed the crime. In any case, Paul leaves no room for Philemon but to accept Onesimus back. The phrase “charge that to my account” simply means that Paul will repay on behalf of Onesimus.

Verse 19 *I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.* The immediate reference of the first clause in this verse, “I, Paul am writing this with my own hand,” is to the promise “I will repay it.” Paul may have dictated the rest of the letter. In the second part of the verse, “I say nothing about your owing me even your very self,” Paul claims that Philemon owes him his very life, his spiritual life that is. “Your own self” here refers to Philemon’s spiritual life. This verse sums up Paul’s determination to see Onesimus back with Philemon.

Verse 20 *Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ.* “Benefit” could be rendered as “favor.” “Do this favor to me in the name of the Lord” is another possible rendering. Or perhaps “do this favor for me as a brother in the Lord.”

Refresh my heart in Christ means “make me (my heart) happy or glad” or “cheer me up.” In Christ here means “as a believer in Christ.” Note that the phrases “in the Lord” and “in Christ” are parallel.

Verse 21 *Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.* Here Paul expresses his confidence that Philemon would comply with his request to receive Onesimus back. It is not clear what Paul implies when he says, “knowing that you will do even more.” One possible meaning is that he hopes Philemon would be willing to set Onesimus free as that would enable him to help Paul during his imprisonment (v 17). The phrase, “I am writing to you” can also be rendered as “I am sending this letter to you.”

Verse 22 *One thing more--prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.* The phrase “one thing more” can be rendered as “meanwhile” or “at the same time.”

To be restored to you. Paul hopes that as a result of the prayers of Philemon and other Christians he would be released from prison and that he will be able to visit Philemon in his home again.

Verses 23-25 *Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow workers. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.* This is Paul’s final greeting. The five men listed here are also mentioned in Colossians (Epaphras in Col 1.7-8, 4.12-13; Mark and Aristarchus in Col 4.10; and Demas and Luke in Col 4.14). Epaphras was a prisoner along with Paul (as is Aristarchus according to Col 4.10). The phrase “in Christ Jesus” in this context means for the sake of or because they work for Christ. If necessary the final blessing, “The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit,” may be rendered in a form of prayer, something like “I pray that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

[\[Back to Table of Contents\]](#)

[\[On to Detailed Table of Contents\]](#)

Detailed Table of Contents

Section One: Introduction

Unit One: Some Basic Questions Answered.....	1
1.1 Why do we need a translation?	1
1.2 What is Bible translation all about?	1
Unit Two: Ideology and Translation	3
2.1 Ideology: our world view and the world of the Bible	3
2.2 Conscious ideological bias	3
2.3 Sub-conscious ideological bias.....	4
2.4 Faithfulness and sensitivity to context.....	4

Section Two: Language

Unit Three: Introduction to Language.....	5
3.1 Defining Language	5
3.2 Terms used in connection with language.....	5
3.3 Notions to be remembered, misconceptions to be discarded	7
Unit Four: Language and Society	9
4.1 Language and speech.....	9
4.2 Norms	9
4.3 Factors that determine the choices made in language use:	10
4.4 Sociolinguistics and related terms	13
Unit Five: Semantic Domains and Bible Translation	16
5.1 Introduction	16
5.2 The study of semantic domains	16
5.3 Steps in analyzing a semantic domain	19
5.4 Example of a semantic domain: Carrying things in Hula	22
5.5 Comparing meanings of words across languages	24
5.6 The source languages.....	25
5.7 Semantic Domain Lexicons	26
Unit Six: Discourse Analysis	27
6.1 Introduction	27
6.2 Types of discourse	27
6.3 Discourse markers	28
6.4 Cohesion	29
6.5 Conclusion	31

Section Three: Biblical Studies

Unit Seven: How the Bible Came to Us.....	33
7.1 Introduction: Bible, Testament and Scripture.....	33
7.2 Contents of the Old Testament	34
7.3 Content of the New Testament	34
7.4 Canon.	35
7.5 The Nature of Biblical Texts	36
7.6 Translations of the Bible.....	39
7.7 The Deuterocanon.....	41
Unit Eight: Causes of Textual Variants	43
8.1 Introductory remarks	43
8.2 Unintentional Changes or Variants.....	43
8.3 Intentional Changes	47
Unit Nine: Bridging the Gaps	49
9.1 Introduction	49
9.2 Language	49

9.3 Culture.....	53
9.4 History.....	54
9.5 Geography.....	54
9.6 Time.....	55
9.7 Ecological Environment.....	55
9.8 Worldview.....	55
9.9 Conclusion.....	56
Unit Ten: Checklist Of Some Important Biblical Terms	57
Unit Eleven: Divine Names	60
Unit Twelve: Biblical Studies and Bible Translation	63
12.1 Lexical and Grammatical studies	63
12.2 Historical-critical studies	64
12.3 Textual Criticism.....	64
12.4 Archaeology	64
12.5 Source Criticism and Redaction Criticism – forming the final text	65
12.6 Canonical Criticism.....	65
12.7 Intertestamental Studies	65
12.8 Intertextuality	65
12.9 Trends in Interpretation.....	66
12.10 Ideology and exegesis	67
12.11 Sociological approaches.....	67

Section Four: Translation Principles

Unit Thirteen: Implicit and explicit information.....	68
13.1 Introduction.....	68
13.2 Application to translation.....	70
13.3 Language differences	70
13.4 Broader questions.....	78
13.5 Cultural background.....	78
13.6 Background specific to particular people and situations.....	81
13.7 Cautions.....	87
13.8 Conclusion.....	88
Unit Fourteen: Translating Figurative Language	90
14.1 Introduction.....	90
14.2 Aspects of figurative language.....	90
14.3 Translating figurative language.....	91
14.4 Types of figurative language.....	93
14.5 The process of handling figures of speech.....	98
14.6 Important Old Testament figures	99
Unit Fifteen: Where Do We Find Words We Don't Have?	101
15.1 Introduction: Relevance for the Translation Curriculum:	101
15.2 Using a descriptive phrase for a single concept	101
15.3 Classifying terms by categories (generic terms)	104
15.4 Working with meaning-sets (domains)	106
15.5 Making use of a cultural equivalent	107
15.6 Borrowing words from other languages.....	108
15.7 Foreign words in the Bible.....	112
15.8 What happens if someone else got there first?	113
15.9 Illustrations as possible solutions.....	114
15.10 Bible names.....	115
Unit Sixteen: Bible Translation Frames	120
16.1 The Organizational Frame.....	120
16.2 Textual frames.....	121
16.3 Social and cultural frames	125

16.4 Cognitive frames.....	134
16.5 Interpersonal frames	139
16.6 Spiritual frames.....	142
16.7 Conclusion	143

Section Five: The Translation process

Unit Seventeen: Structures and Procedures	144
17.1 Roles within the Translation Task	144
17.2 Translation Procedures: Setting Up a Translation Project.....	148
17.3 Pre-Translation Procedures	149
17.4 Translation Procedures	151
17.5 Post-Translation Procedures: Evaluating the Product.....	152
Unit Eighteen: Revising Older Translations	154
18.1 Introduction.....	154
18.2 Various types of revision	154
18.3 What aspects of a translation may be revised?	155
Unit Nineteen: The Use of Computers in Translation	163
19.1 Introduction	163
19.2 Keying in translated text.....	163
19.3 Checking for content and consistency.....	164
19.4 Text management	164
19.5 Correspondence and Email.....	165
19.6 Exegetical tools.....	165
19.7 Electronic text and publishing	165
19.8 Revising Older Translations	166

Section Six: Practice passages

Practice Passage One: The Book of Ruth	167
Ruth Introduction.....	167
Ruth Ch.1.....	167
Ruth Ch.2.....	171
Ruth Ch.3.....	171
Ruth Ch.4.....	181
Practice Passage Two: The Book of Jonah	185
Jonah Ch.1	185
Jonah Ch.2	189
Jonah Ch.3	191
Jonah Ch.4.....	193
Practice Passage Three: Mark Chapter One	195
Mark 1.1-8.	195
Mark 1.9-11.....	197
Mark 1.12-13.....	198
Mark 1.14-15.....	198
Mark 1.16-20.....	199
Mark 1.21-28.....	200
Mark 1.29-34.....	201
Mark 1.35-39.....	201
Mark 1.40-45.....	202
Practice Passage Four: John Chapter Nine.....	204
John 9 Introduction.....	204
John 9.1-12.....	204
John 9.13-34.....	207
John 9.35-41.....	211
Practice Passage Five: Paul's Letter to Philemon	213