Bringing the Bible to Us

Original

Ancient Copies

English translation

what kind of process?
III. How to Translate

Principles of Translation
The Bible in English

Why do translations differ?

They may differ in translation principles.
A. Theory of Translation
Possible Purposes of Translations

- A help for Greek and Hebrew
- Illustration of cultural relevance
  - Cottonpatch NT
  - Letters to Street Christians
  - The Message
- Continuous reading
- Study of cross-references
- General

Many goals.
Possible Audiences

- Audiences with lower skills
  - Children’s Bibles
  - Bible in Basic English
- Audiences with high skills (college graduate): NEB
- Using ecclesiastical tradition
- General
“that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being ...” (ESV)
κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ
“according-to the wealth of-the glory his” (intrl.)

interlinear: copies form, with ungrammatical results.

“according to the riches of his glory” (KJV, ESV)

formal method: copies form, with minimal changes

“out of his glorious riches” (NIV)

natural-idiom method: finds natural English idiom

“from his glorious, unlimited resources” (NLT)

paraphrastic method: rephrases basic idea
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Interlinear</strong></th>
<th><strong>Formal</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>“according-to the wealth of-the glory his”</td>
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<td>- exact copy</td>
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<td>- unclear</td>
<td>- fairly clear</td>
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Comparison of Methods (1)

Interlinear

“according-to the wealth of-the glory his”

- exact copy
- ungrammatical
- unclear

Formal

“according to the riches of his glory”

- words correspond
- strange
- fairly clear

Improvements
Comparison of Methods (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Natural idiom</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
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<tr>
<td>“““out of his glorious riches””</td>
<td>“from his glorious, unlimited resources”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🟢 some word relations</td>
<td>🟢 ideas only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🟢 ordinary English</td>
<td>🟢 easy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🟢 clear</td>
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Loss.
Spectrum of Methods

copy grammar

restructure grammar

inter-linear

formal

natural idiom

paraphrase

easier English

problems?
nuances

Formal

“according to the riches of his glory”

Natural idiom

“out of his glorious riches”

OT: God appears in splendor and brightness

idea of glory in OT?

proportion?

nuances lost
Nuances in Paraphrase

**Formal**

“according to the riches of his glory”

**Paraphrase**

“from his glorious, unlimited resources”

- idea of lack of limit?
- idea of riches gone?

nuances changed
An Example: 2 Sam. 5:19

- הָתְתֶם בְּבֵיתִי (II Sam. 5:19)
- “?-you-give-them into-hand-my” (interlinear)
- “Will you give them into my hand?” (ESV)
- “Will you hand them over to me?” (NIV)

formal method: copies form, with minimal changes
natural-idiom method: finds natural English idiom
Evaluation

- Paraphrase is easier, but less nuanced.
- Choose ease or accuracy, but not both.
- Is the most formal always most accurate?

Loss and gain.
Spectrum of Methods

copy grammar
inter-linear
formal
natural idiom
more obscure?
problems here?
restructure grammar
para-phrase
Challenges with Meaning
An Example: Prov. 23:16

- והפלוֹתִי כְלָיוֹתִי (Prov. 23:16)
- “and-will-exult kidneys-my” (interlinear)
- “Yea, my reins shall rejoice” (KJV)
- “My inmost being will exult” (ESV; etc.)
  - kidneys are site of emotion

formal method: copies form, with minimal changes

conservative method: when form is unclear, copies meaning
Comparison of Methods (3)

Formal

“my kidneys will exult”

- words correspond
- strange
- obscure

Conservative

“my inmost being will exult”

- words correspond
- less strange
- clear

Improvements.
“My inmost being\textsuperscript{1} will exult” (ESV)

\textsuperscript{1}Hebrew my kidneys
When to Change Form

- Change to make grammatical.
- Change to indicate meaning.
- But questionable whether one should change for ease.
An Example: 1 Peter 1:13

- ἀναζωσάμενοι τὰς ὀσφύας τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν
- “up-girding the loins of the mind-your” (interl.)
- “gird up the loins of your mind” KJV
- formal equivalence
- “preparing your minds for action” ESV
- conservative equivalence

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1Greek girding up the loins of your mind
An Example: Eph. 1:18

- ἡ ἐλπὶς τῆς κλήσεως αὐτοῦ (Eph. 1:18)
- “the hope of-the calling his”
  - interlinear
- “the hope of his calling” KJV, NKJV, NASB
  - formal equivalence
- “the hope to which he has called you” RSV, ESV, NIV, NRSV, NEB, GNB
  - conservative equivalence
“hope of his calling”

“I hope that he calls me.”

“hope to which he has called you”

English “of” is naturally read as introducing object

“he has spoken (and guaranteed) my destiny (hope)”

unambiguous meaning, reproducing the Greek
Paraphrasing
(radically restructuring)

conservative

radical

the hope to which he has called you. (RSV)

the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. (NLT)

where is our response in hope?

purpose of call?

verbal promise?

super?
Spectrum of Methods (2)

copy grammar → restructure grammar

inter-linear | formal | conservative | natural idiom | paraphrase

1-1 match, but can lose meaning

reasonable middle

easy, but lose nuances
Conservative Method

- Preserve form when possible.
- When meaning is obscure, change form.
- Change form \textit{conservatively}.
  - No radical paraphrasing.
Terminology for Translation

- 20th century: "dynamic equivalence" moved away from form.
- It used "formal equivalence" to label (somewhat misleadingly) all earlier translations.
- It covered a spectrum.
- Now called "functional equivalence," "idiomatic equivalence," "meaning-based translation."
Problem with "dynamic"

- Focused on basic meaning.
- Underestimated nuances.
- Became a broad umbrella.

- copy grammar
- restructure grammar

- formal equivalence
- dynamic equivalence

- inter-linear
- formal
- conservative
- natural idiom
- paraphrase
Evaluation of Translation Methods

- Grammar and vocabulary systems differ.
- Often can copy both grammar and meaning.
- Cannot always copy both.
- When forced to choose form or meaning, copy meaning-content.
- Radical rewriting changes nuances.
Maxim for Translation

- Preserve maximal meaning.
- Preserve form when possible.
- When form interferes with comprehension, conservative change.
- For evangelism and for beginning readers, consider ease.
B. The Question of Culture
Cultural Transfer: 1 Cor. 16:20

- “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (NASB, ESV, NIV)
- “I should like you to shake hands all round as a sign of Christian love.” (Phillips)
- “Pass the greetings around with holy embraces!” (Message)
- “Greet each other in Christian love.” (NLT)
Cultural Transfer: 
Heb. 12:20

“‘They could not endure the order that was given, ‘If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.’” (ESV)

“They were afraid to move.” (Message)

“They staggered back under God’s command ...” (NLT)
“Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings” (ESV).

“So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas” (NLT).

- our culture attracted by newness

“Don’t be lured away from him by the latest speculations about him” (Message).

- our culture attracted by speculation
Questions about Culture

“dynamic equivalence”

from Eugene Nida, transferring linguistic meaning

from Charles Kraft, transferring cultural function; “cultural equivalence”

John Beekman calls it “idiomatic equivalence”

Watch out!

different practices
Cultural Equivalence

**+Insights+**
- Embed meaning in cultural context
- Apply gospel flexibly

**-Dangers-**
- Wipe out unique history
- Underestimate complexity
- Anthropologist as new priest
Cultural Equivalence

+Insights+
- Embed meaning in cultural context
- Apply gospel flexibly in theology and church

-Dangers-
- Wipe out unique history
- Underestimate complexity in equivalence
- Anthropologist as new priest
A Spectrum of Practices

copy grammar

restructure grammar

cultural preservation

interlinear

Young’s

KJV/ESV

NASB

RSV

NIV

GNB

NEB

NRSV

Phillips

NLT

LB

Message

“cultural equivalence”
C. Difficulties in Achieving Translation Goals
Thanks for What We Have

- All main translations show main meanings.
- All show the gospel.
- People come to salvation through them.
Difficulties with Formal-Equivalent Translation

- Words don’t match, 1-1.
- Grammar doesn’t match, 1-1.
- 1-1 grammar gives illusion of faithfulness, but subtle obstacles to understanding.
- Difficult to read in large amounts.
- Holiness confused with alienness.
Difficulties with Restructuring

- Obscurities and ambiguities glossed over.
- Frustrates preacher’s reference to interpretive problems.
- Flattens metaphors.
- More prone to big errors.
- Hides allusions to other passages.
- Overconfidence in translator’s understanding of language.
Difficulties with Cultural-Equivalent Translation

- Wipes out scandal of incarnation.
- Can’t succeed. (Too many cultural references.)
- Arbitrary stopping point.
- Paternalistic in assuming people can’t understand cultures.
- Overconfidence in judging what is “significant.”
Choosing a Translation

- One central translation for memorization.
- Reject cultural modernization.
- Look for fullest meaning equivalence.
- Right now in USA, **NIV**.
- But NIV is too dynamic.
- ESV (2001) better.

An imperfect world.
Wrapping Up Translation Evaluation

- Aim is preserving meaning.
- Restructuring helps evangelism.
- Restructuring produces problems for detailed study.
- Stay formal when possible.
D. Examples
1 John 2:2 Vocabulary

NIV: He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

RSV: and he is the expiation for our sins.

ESV: and he is the propitiation for our sins.

Use theological vocabulary when appropriate.
So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, ...
Romans 1:16 Translated

“not for I-am-ashamed the gospel” (interlinear)

ESV: For I am not ashamed of the gospel, ...

NIV: I am not ashamed of the gospel, ...

GNB: I have complete confidence in the gospel;

Show connections of thought.
Romans 2:14

“when for Gentiles the not law having by-nature the of-the law do, these law not having to-themselves are law” (interlinear)

NIV: Indeed when Gentiles, who do not have ...

RSV: When Gentiles who have not ...

ESV: For when Gentiles who have not ...

Show connections of thought.
“... Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all nations, ....” (ESV)
Romans 1:5 Ambiguity

“obedience of-faith” (interlinear)

KJV: ... obedience to the faith ... 
NIV: ... the obedience that comes from faith 
GW: the obedience that is associated with faith 
NEB: to faith and obedience 
ESV: the obedience of faith

Preserve ambiguities in the original.
Romans 2:14 Ambiguity

NIV: (Indeed when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law ...)

ESV: For when Gentiles who have not the law by nature do what the law requires ...
Strange Metaphors: 1 Samuel 3:19

Hebrew: And-the-Lord was with-him and-not he-caused-to-fall from-all words-his to-ground.

GNB: and the Lord was with him and made come true everything that Samuel said.

ESV: and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

Preserve metaphors.
Hebrew: everyone the right in eyes-his does.

... everyone did as he saw fit.  (NIV)

everyone did what was right in his own eyes.  (ESV)

Preserve metaphors.
G小镇 therefore girding up the loins of the mind your ...

Therefore gird up your minds, ... (RSV)

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; ... (NIV)

Therefore, preparing your minds for action,\(^1\) ... (ESV)

\(^1\)Greek *girding up the loins of your mind*
“Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed— for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. (ESV)
Keywords repeat in the original.
Show the repetition in translation.
The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. (RSV)

"bosom" is now only female

Is Abraham embracing Lazarus?
One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus.¹ (John 13:23)

¹Greek *in the bosom of Jesus*

A place just along side the host at a feast
The Picture in Luke 16:22

Abraham is host, and Lazarus has a place of honor.

The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side.\(^1\) (ESV)

\(^1\)Greek *bosom*; also verse 23
Challenge of Genesis 43:34

So they drank and were merry with him. (RSV)

Hebrew word shakar: "be or become drunk"--intoxicated

Don't hide the sins of the saints.
Attempt with Genesis 43:34

Try: "And they drank and became drunk with him"

It sounds as if they were thoroughly sousey! But Hebrew is not specific. Were they ready to pass out, or somewhat drunk, or slightly tipsy, or somewhere in between?
Try:
"And they drank and became intoxicated with him"

"Intoxicated" is too technical. It's not how one tells a story. (Wrong register.)

In the story line, the point is not how much alcohol, but being convivial.
In England, we "make merry."

They understand what it means.

Maybe American teetotalers are a little naive!
And they drank and were merry\textsuperscript{1} with him. (ESV)

\textsuperscript{1}Hebrew \textit{became intoxicated}