

## **COORDINATORS**

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# PERSPECTIVES ON THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

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**Abstract:** *Bible Translation has known a long history involving more translators from various cultural environments than any other translation. The translator has the missionary responsibility to spread the word of God and to meet the expectations and the aesthetic and evangelical necessities of the receiver. Bible Translation is a socio-cultural phenomenon likewise since it has a normative character, it is a manual towards which the readers are directed. Within the Biblical discourse we encounter a multitude of literary genres, poetry and prose, narratives and dialogue, parables and laws. We are entitled to say that the Bible is not a simple book, devoided of ambiguity and mystery, a mere book of ideas or a modern book. The access to the Biblical text was and has been possible thanks to the existing translations which have followed the criteria of accessibility, clarity, accuracy towards the source text in accordance with the level of reception and the culture of the reader.*

**Keywords:** *Bible, equivalence, interpretation, meaning, translation*

## 1. Introduction

Bible translation has a long tradition since it began in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, involves far more languages, 1393 languages by the end of 1968, and it is concerned with a wide variety of cultures and it includes a wide range of literary types (from lyric poetry to theological discourse).

During the Middle Ages religious translation reaches the status of exclusive practice. The translator has the missionary responsibility to spread the word of God and live up to the aesthetic and evangelistic expectations and needs. The famous scholar St Jerome (Eusebius Hieronymus) committed himself to translating most of the Bible in Latin – The Vulgate which meant laborious work: in 382 he corrected the existing Latin version of The New Testament.

Bible translating has generated more data in more languages than any other translation practice: it enjoys a longer history, has reached more

people in more diverse cultures and has involved more translators from different backgrounds than any other translation practice. Bible translating has touched all fields, as within the text one finds passages of poetry, and prose, narrative and dialogue, parables and laws. The sheer quantity of examples and breadth of scope have made Bible translation a necessary part of any study on the theory of translation. As far as theoretical contributions are concerned, it can be viewed in similar terms to the practical, anecdotal approach typical of North American literary translation theory. (Bassnett, 2011: 40)

Biblical discourse, an authoritative type of discourse within Judaism and Christianity is endowed with authority given the fact that it is a normative kind of text, a type of manual which people turn to, interpret and comply with in a great deal of real-life contexts. Therefore, Bible translation proves to be a socio-cultural phenomenon.

A translation which can be read against the original is bound to acquire an authoritative status. A successful version is the Septuagint according to the opinion of the Fathers of the early church. Behind Septuagint there was a team of 72 translators who, in spite of the fact that they worked independently, they were united in one Spirit and they managed not to differ from one another in a single word, keeping the meaning and even word order, as stated by Augustine in the City of God.

Bible translation was seen as a societal, institutional phenomenon being necessary to view it in its context and in its formative and re-formative role in the establishment, defense and innovation of cultural identities.

The model author-text-reader explains what occurs in the process of comprehending texts, very much the same as the traditional model sender-message-receiver model. Translation cannot take place in a vacuum, but in a particular cultural environment which needs to be suitable and get the right feedback/response from the readers/audience.

The reader response is of an enormous value in the field of textual interpretation and the domain of translation studies relies on theories and hypotheses, including reader-directed strategies.

## **2. Landmarks in English Bible Translation**

The first validated forms of translation which are worth mentioning are Jerome's Vulgate and Tyndale's New Testament.

Jerome's Vulgate was accomplished by the commission of Pope Damasus in 382. It was a long way until it was declared free from dogmatic error and it could be used in theology and preaching. Initially, it was read in public and discredited as it was a translation from Hebrew and not Greek (Septuagint). He was under severe attack being rebuked for daring to make alterations in the Gospels "against ancient authority."

The Vulgate went through revisions before coming to the point of being adopted as an authoritative version by the Roman Catholic Church. It was authorized by the Roman Catholic Church and declared authoritative in 1546.

In the fifteenth century printing affected the matter of authoritative translations because printers were under the control of ecclesiastical and state authorities. Tyndale paid with his life for his translation.

Among Landmarks in English Bible translation there can be noted in chronological order the following: John Wycliffe's Bible (1380), Tyndale's New Testament (1525), Coverdale's Bible (1535), Mathew's Bible (1537), Geneva Bible, Bishop's Bible Version (1568), The King James Version (1611), Revised Version (1881), Revised Standard Version (1946), New American Standard Version (1956-1970). Two main translations based on dynamic equivalence were The Living Bible, released in 1971 and New International Version, published in 1978. Cultural trends coincided with their appearance and granted their success

The theory of dynamic equivalence in Bible translation appeared through the application of the methods and insights of the modern linguistics to the translation process: the model of analysis-transfer-

restructuring stood for a radical step forward from the methods of formal correspondence that had a great influence over Bible translation as yet.

Readers of an English Bible are not to be at the hand of a translation committee's interpretation of a passage. They have the liberty to decide the meaning of a passage. More than that, a translation is supposed to preserve the full exegetical potential of the original text. Therefore, the more literary a text is, the more ambiguous it becomes.

As long as translation makes use of commentary and interpretation, the biblical text is destabilized since the dynamic equivalent interpretations introduce set of contradictions into the mix.

The English Bible translation was ruled by the assumption that the aim of the Bible translation was to translate the words of the original Hebrew and Greek texts as much as the process of translation permits up to the middle of the twentieth century. William Tyndale was the one who coined even words such as *intercession* and *atonement* in order to be faithful to the actual words of the Greek text.

Alister McGrath stated in his book on King James Version that the translators tried to make sure that every word in the original had an English equivalent, to highlight all words added to the original in order to make it intelligible and to comply with the word order of the original as much as it is possible. (Packer, 2005: 56)

About the middle of the twentieth century, a theory of translation known as dynamic equivalence became the translation theory in use becoming, more recently, known as functional equivalence having the goal of reproducing not the words of the original but the ideas or thoughts. The influential scholars of this movement are Kenneth Pike and Eugene Nida. The basic idea is that translation following dynamic equivalence is done thought-for-thought and little word-for-word.

The initial premise that the task of the English Bible translation is to reproduce the words of the original in the words of the receptor language has been available up to the twentieth century. Translation aimed at being



accurate, therefore accuracy took precedence over literary style of translation. Relative formality of language and syntax prevailed over literary beauty. In the mid of twentieth century Eugene Nida was allegiant to his theory of “dynamic equivalence” which values the reaction of the reader to the translated text rather than the translation of words and phrases themselves. In other words, a synonymous phrase in “thought for thought” translation can be compared to “essentially literal” translation. (Nida, 1982: 59)

### **3. Mistaken Beliefs about the Bible**

Translation theories assume a number of things about the Bible which do not rule specific choices that translators make along the way, but the starting *premises exercise* a formative influence on the actual translation process. There are some mistaken beliefs/fallacies about the Bible which *underlie* some modern translations about the Bible: The Bible is a uniformly simple book, it is a book of ideas rather than concrete particulars, the Bible is a modern book, it needs correction and it is a book which lacks mystery and ambiguity.

#### *3.1. The Bible is a Simple Book*

Modern Translation aims at producing a colloquial Bible with a simple vocabulary and syntax. The premise is that the Bible is intended for people of limited knowledge and intellectual potential. It is an assumption unravelling a lapse in logic since God *stooped* to human understanding when he revealed his truth in human words which does not mean that the Bible is transparent or complex. God accommodated himself to human understanding without making any reference to the level of comprehension or artistic sophistication of the writers or the assumed audience of the Bible.

Jesus spoke in parables, which means that the message conveyed was not so clearly, straightforward or simplistic stated. The meaning is not revealed on the surface. There is a “delayed action insight” which means that only those who brood over the meaning, ponder and analyse come to

penetrate the message beneath the surface (Ryken, 2002: 67): “To you it has been given to know...but to them it has not been given... This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” (Matthew, 13: 11, 13, ESV)

In the above extract the personal pronoun “you” and “them” have a totally different reference, the first one refers to the disciples while the second “them” is about the unbelieving “masses,” a clear contrast which tells us that the discourse found in the Bible is far from being accessible to everyone:

Save me, o God!  
For the waters have up to my neck.  
I sink in deep mire,  
Where there is no foothold. (Psalm 69:1, ESV)

A man who wonders from the way of understanding  
Will rest in the assembly of the dead (Proverbs 21: 17)  
The horse is prepared for the day o battle,  
But deliverance is of the Lord. (Proverbs 21: 31)

The Lord will send on you cursing, confusion and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly because of your wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken me. (Deuteronomy 28: 20, NKJV)

Informational writing tends to be concrete turning to abstraction at some points:

It happened in the spring of the year, at the time kings go out to battle, that Joab led out the armed forces and ravaged the country of the people of Ammon and came and besieged Rabbah. (NKJV, Chronicles 20: 1)  
I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. (NKJV, Romans 14: 2)

The word “unclean” does not have its literal meaning, it means common, making reference to the things prohibited by the Jewish ceremonial law: “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed

are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.” (NKJV, Romans 14: 19, 21)

The idea transmitted is that a believer does not have to abandon his own convictions, but love is supposed to motivate him to carefully observe that what he does affects others. It is deemed sinful to do something which is obviously wrong even if the common opinion says it is sensible. In the light of this, if a believer is influencing another to disobey his conscience, making him to “stumble” that ought not to happen. (Munger, 1999: 78)

The fragments quoted show that they demand one’s best power of concentration to follow the flow of images and thought. The use of the figurative meaning, concrete words used with a metaphorical meaning make the text difficult to be comprehended.

Another aspect which makes the text thick and difficult to be grasped is the use of technical theological terminology, intricate, weighty language: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” (Romans 1: 18, ESV) The words *wrath*, *ungodliness*, *unrighteousness*, *suppress the truth* have a definite inclination towards religious terminology.

The Bible *encompasses* a huge variety of styles and contents, from a simple and understandable style to a tricky and metaphorical way of expression. Victorian poet Francis Thompson called the Bible “the most elastic of all books” coming with the addition that “whoever opens it, learned or simple, equally finds something... appropriate to his understanding.”

Each translator envisioned a certain type of Bible, an alternative which could considerably deviate from the original. The vocabulary is subject to simplification, figurative language is modified or eliminated along with theological language and rhetorical devices are altogether eliminated, the result being a simplistic, free version of translation.

### *3.2 The Second Mistaken Belief: The Bible is a Book of Ideas*

A prevalent misconception is that the Bible is dominantly a book of ideas, an ideational book. It is true that the discourse of the Bible embodies ideas and we can extract theological and moral ideas from biblical texts. But the texture of the Biblical discourse is rich in poetry as we can see in the Psalms, both concrete and imagistic styles can be encountered in proverbs, prophecy shares the same inclination, abstraction and concretion is also found in expository (informational) writing.

Apparently, the Biblical text is rich in literary qualities and they are resistant to reduction of abstract ideas.

### *3.3. The Bible is a Modern Book*

Another mistaken preconception is that the Bible is a modern book, a belief which is implied by the practices of modern translations. What is typical of modern techniques of translation is the fact that references to ancient customs and idioms that are foreign to modern readers are replaced by formulations that are immediately accessible. Certain details in the biblical text which belong to antiquity are updated and phrased in terms of modern counterparts.

Contemporizing the Bible ranks high on readability, but, undoubtedly, it obscures the precise details of what had happened in fact. The Living Bible version is rich in such accounts: “Then Joshua sent two spies from the Israeli camp of Acacia to cross the river and check out the situation on the other side, especially at Jericho...” (Joshua, 2: 1-3)

Being an ancient document belonging to a remote world from our own world it goes without saying that it can transport the reader to another time and place. It can be easily distorted if it is to be translated in such a way to make it appear a modern book. (Scorgie, 2003: 98)

### *3.4. The Bible is a Book Devoid of Ambiguity and Mystery*

Even at a literary level mystery is maintained in the Biblical text. One familiar passage is worth being mentioned so as to notice that the surface meaning of words does not contribute in any way in grasping the full meaning: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, but whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” (John, 12: 24-25, ESV)

Paradox and foregrounding are rhetorical forms specific to the Biblical discourse. They are the main sources of ambiguity and mystery in the discourse. The concepts of life and death are deeply ingrained in the text and could help the reader grasp the meaning. Some theological thinking and background could definitely add to the text comprehension and extracting the meaning. Meanings are also multiple, therefore, paradoxical situations require a precise and accurate thinking. Doctrinal thinking is the cornerstone of biblical interpretation.

The reliability criteria of a Bible can be detected in the comparative analyses of Biblical source text and the translation outcome, the way words are rendered into English. The determination of linguistic meaning is set by analyzing the difference between linguistic interpretation and thematic interpretation of meaning.

The readability criterion is not supposed to govern translation, it is taken into account inasmuch as the parameters of accuracy are included in the translated text, the difficulty being inherent in the translated version. The Bible translation should not be expected to be simpler than it was for the audience.

The effect on the reader can be achieved in a number of ways. The final effect is usually achieved through a combination of “illocutionary strategies” or ways of making use of linguistic devices. Readers of translated texts expect the combination of illocutionary strategies to be less effective in the translation than in the original. It is expected that some is lost in the translation process.

#### 4. Conclusion

Bible translation has been an institutional phenomenon being essential to consider it in its context and in its formative and re-formative function in the setting, defense and innovation of cultural identities.

The process of translation has proven to be a challenging one encompassing a number of criteria which account for its excellence. The criteria governing the translation process in the case of the Bible are readability, accessibility, clarity, as well as accuracy and fidelity to the source culture and its historical context. There is a multitude of genres in the Biblical text which call for exegesis and interpretation in the translation work.

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# THE BEGINNING AND EVOLUTION OF THE GOTHIC SCENE

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**Abstract:** *The main purpose of the research is to analyze how Gothic literature changed from over three centuries ago, focusing on the aspects of human identity, the evolution of various forms of Gothic art, and the relationship between gender and identity throughout selected novels. We also intend to investigate the influence of Gothicism in the first novel that coined the term “gothic,” Horace Walpole’s “Castle of Otranto – A Gothic Story.” As we will present the evolution and features of gothic literature, we will base our findings on viable characteristics to provide an outline of the identity for a better understanding of the gothic characters and the writing techniques employed by this genre, and how gothic becomes a topos of the past and present, as we are accustomed to observe in novels, movies, fashion, and architecture.*

*We provided a complex overview of Gothic fiction, establishing who its initiator was and pointing out the overarching themes and symbols that define the genre. We specified that in time, Gothic novels changed their spatio-temporal location; thus, the haunted castle became a gloomy city, and ghosts were replaced by dark science. In supporting our statement, we exposed the symbolism of “Frankenstein” (1818) and “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” (1886) in a literary context and also sought to explore the evolution and fascination for Gothic fiction.*

**Keywords:** *gender and identity, Gothic art, Gothic fiction, Gothic themes and symbols*

## Introduction

When it comes to situating Gothic fiction into a literary selection, it is essential to acknowledge that this current is not Gothic per se. This sensational genre has its roots way long after medieval times and the post-Renaissance period. In time, gothic literature has known numerous changes among its outstanding creations.

First, the antique prose and romantic ballads merged into Shakespeare’s comedy and tragedy. After this beautiful literary blending, the first written production to own the name “Gothic” was a fictitious novel situated by its author into the Medieval Ages. The Father of Gothic, Horace