

Translations: Issue & Approaches

Why Translate?

- The Bible is originally written in:
 - Hebrew from the 15th-2nd centuries BC
 - Not the same as modern Hebrew spoken in Israel today
 - Aramaic from the 6th century BC-1st century AD
 - Koine Greek from the 1st century AD
 - Different from both Classical Greek and Modern Greek
- If you can't read these languages, then you need a translation
- And even if you can, you must decide on how to translate the text into the language that you speak and think in.
- Example: 1 Corinthians 7:36 (NKJV vs. NASB vs. NIV vs. NEB)

Translation Terminology

- Original Language
 - The language that one is translating *from*
 - Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic
- Receptor Language
 - The language that one is translating *to*
 - Early 21st century American English
- Historical Distance
 - The differences that exist between the original language and receptor language, both in matters of words, grammar, and idioms as well as in matters of culture and history
 - *Idiom*: a phrase or a fixed expression that has a figurative, and/or sometimes literal meaning
 - An idiom's figurative meaning is different from the literal meaning

Theories of Translation

- Formal Equivalence (Word-for-Word/Literal)
 - Tries to keep the words and grammar as close to the original languages as possible.
- Functional Equivalence (Thought-for-Thought/Dynamic)
 - Tries to keep the meaning the same, but to use words and idioms that are more natural to the receptor language while maintaining historical distance in all historical and factual matters.
- Free Equivalence (Paraphrase)

- Tries to convey the ideas of the text without much concern about keeping the actual words of the original language.
- Examples
 - Proverbs 18:24 (KJV vs. NASB vs. NIV vs. The Message)
 - Romans 3:25 (NASB vs. NIV vs. The Message)

Problem Areas

Weights, measures, & money

- Transliteration
 - The conversion of a text from one script to another
 - Example: δηνάριον = dēnariion = denarius
 - A day's wages (Matt. 20:2-13)
- Conversion
 - Whose?
 - Metric, "Standard"
 - Tricky with money
 - Inflation
 - Hyperbole (*talaton* vs. *denarion* in Matt. 18:23-24)

Euphemisms

- A mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.
- 3 options (ex. Gen. 31:35):
 - Literal: "the way upon me of women."
 - Formal equivalence: "the manner of women is upon me."
 - Functional equivalence: "I am having my monthly period."
- Is it properly understood? (Ex: 1 Cor. 7:1)
 - Literal/NASB: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."
 - NAB: "A man is better off having no relations with a woman."
 - Easily misunderstood
 - NIV: "It is good for a man not to marry."
 - Footnote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."
- Exercise: 1 Peter 1:13

Vocabulary

- Expanded range
 - Some words have a range of meaning in the original language beyond that of our modern language
- Unintentional connotations

○ Some words have “loaded” meanings in our modern language that they didn’t have in the original language

Wordplays

- Biblical authors often use wordplays like rhyming or homonyms to make points that don’t often translate well
 - *Homonym*: A word that is spelled and pronounced like another but has a different meaning
 - Example: Amos 8:1-2 (NRSV vs. NIV)

Grammar & Syntax

- Different languages have different preferred structures
 - Example: Genitive in Greek
 - Literal: “of”
 - Other possible translations: “from”, “belonging to”, “{son/daughter} of”, “which is part of”, “having the qualities of”, “which comes from”, “made out of”, “containing”, “which/who is”, “toward”, “over”, “produced by”, “which produces”, “out of”, “than”, “for”, “during which”, “where”, “by”, “with reference to”, “in association with”, etc.

Matters of Gender

- How do we translate terms that in the original language were gender inclusive
 - Example: ἄνθρωπος (anthropos)
 - “Man, human being”
 - Generic (see Matt. 12:35, NIV)
 - Gender specific (see Matt. 12:13, NIV)
 - Solutions
 - “Man” → “Human/person”
 - “Man” → “Man and/or Woman”
 - “Man” → “They/them”
 - All have pronoun issues

How many translations do we need?!

- Unless you read the original languages, it is best to have at least 2 different Bible translations from different translational styles.
 - Example: An NIV & NASB
- Otherwise, you are tied to the translational and exegetical theory of a single translator
 - Committee over Single Translator
 - Helps avoid Theological Predisposition

Some Good Tools

- Interlinear Bible
- Websites:
 - www.biblegateway.com
 - Has The Message
 - www.blueletterbible.org
 - Has in depth Greek & Hebrew tools