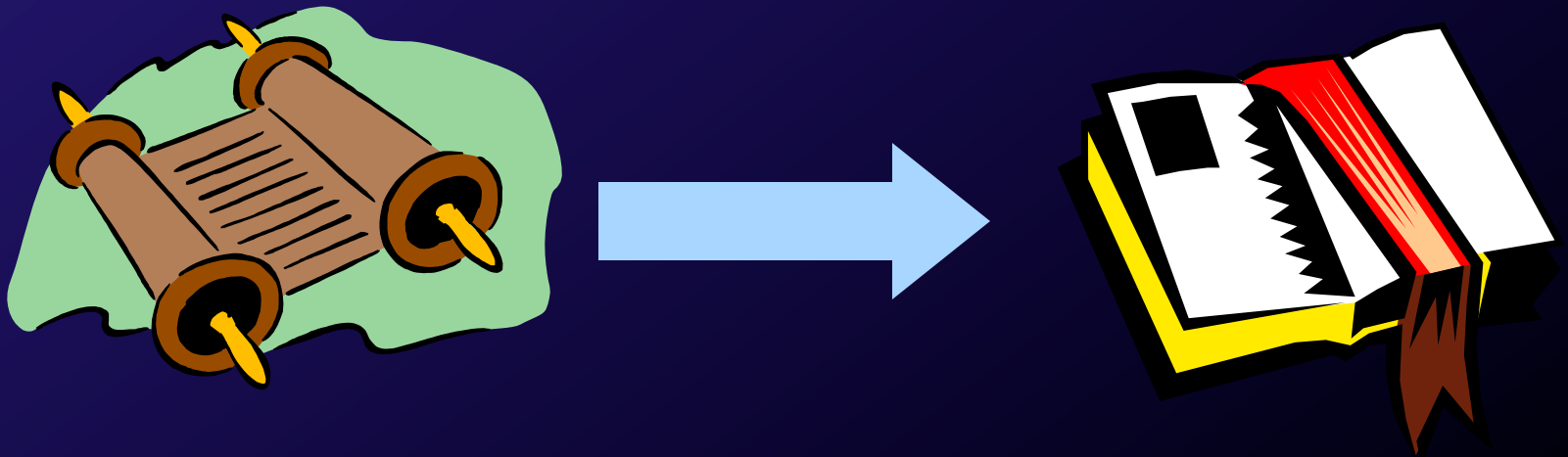


Bible Translation

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KJV

NKJV

NASB

NIV

ESV

CEV

RSV

LB

TNIV

TEV

NRSV

REB

ISV

NLT

ASV

NEB

NET

HCSB



Why Is Translation Necessary?

- Initial obvious answer: The Bible is written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, none of which we speak today in our own context
- But the deeper question here is “Why do people keep on translating? Why so many translations in English? And why update a translation?”

Why Is Ongoing Translation Necessary?

- Hebrew
 - Greek
 - Aramaic
 - Because our understanding of the text changes and develops
 - Because the English language changes
- The text stays the same,
so why keep on translating?

Our Understanding of the Bible Changes

- Luke 2:7 (1984 NIV): She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no *room for them in the inn.*
- Luke 2:7 (2011 NIV): She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no *guest room available for them.*

Our Understanding of the Bible Changes

Phil 2:6 (1984 NIV): “[Christ Jesus] Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped...” (*harpagmos*)

Phil 2:6 (2011 NIV): “[Christ Jesus] Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage...”

The English Language Changes

Psalm 23:1

- Wycliffe Bible (1382?): The Lord governeth me, and nothing shall fail to me;
- KJV: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- ASV (1901): Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- NIV: The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

The English Language Changes

“Don we now our gay
apparel....”



The English Language Changes

- The Web
- Thong (Acts 22:25: they stretched [Paul] out with **thongs**...; NASB)
- Slew (e.g., Ps 78:34)
- Men (people or males?)
- Alien...to...Foreigners

The Challenge of Translation

- “No such thing as an exact equivalent of meaning between words in different languages...” (C. H. Dodd)
- This means that translation is an approximation.
- This means that all translation is interpretation.

The Challenge of Translation

Every translation is itself an interpretation. Therefore, in a certain sense, every Bible translation is a kind of streamlined exegesis representing innumerable interpretive judgments and decisions”

(Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 41).

Two Philosophies of Translation:

**1. Formal Equivalence
(sometimes called
“literal”; word-for-word)**

**Attempts to convey both
FORM and
MEANING of
the original**

**2. Functional Equivalence
(sometimes called
meaning-based; idiomatic)**

**Captures
MEANING of
the original;
attending to
FORM less
important**

Formal Equivalence

Whenever possible:

**Consistently renders any given word in original with a corresponding English word as much as possible;*

**Retains word order of original language as much as possible.*

Heb 1:3--“the Son sustains all things *tō rēmati tēs dunameōs*: “by the word of his power”

Functional Equivalence

Translates by attending the functional (rather than formal) similarities between the two languages.

-Doesn't attempt to consistently render each word in original with a corresponding English word

-Doesn't attempt to retain original word order in any kind of strict way when this obscures the meaning.

Heb 1:3--“the Son sustains all things *tō rēmati tēs dunameōs*: “by his powerful word”

**FORMAL
EQUIVALENT**

**FUNCTIONAL
OR DYNAMIC
EQUIVALENT**



More Form Based

More Meaning Based

The Goal of Translation:

To take a text in one language and reproduce its meaning as precisely as possible in another language



unlocking tool

a button

solution

**a low
offshore
island**

“Key”

**main,
primary**

**test answer
sheet**

musical pitch

“I lost my key.”



**“That is the key to
the puzzle.”**



“What was his key point?”

“I wrote a test key.”

“What key is that in?”



**“Press the right
key!”**



**“He lives in the Florida
Keys.”**



To translate accurately:

We have to find the *right word* in the receptor language *in each context*.

English

Spanish

“Key”

Llave (lock)



Clave (solution)



Tono (musical pitch)



Tecla (button)



Cayo (island)



The same is true of the Biblical languages

“**grace**”

“**credit**”

CHARIS

“**goodwill**”

- **For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith... (Eph. 2:8)**
- **If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? (Luke 6:32)**
- **He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; (Acts 7:10)**

“**person**”

“**man**” (male)

ANTHROPOS

Matthew 12:12

How much more valuable is an anthropos than a sheep!



NIV 1984:

How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!

NIV 2011:

How much more valuable is a person than a sheep!

paidagogos (Gal 3:24)

*Teacher (CEV)

*Schoolmaster (KJV)

*Disciplinarian ([N]RSV)

*Custodian (CEB)

*Guardian (ESV; HCSB)

*Lead to... (NIV)

Hebrew 1:3 — “the Son sustains all things...*tō
rēm̄ati tēs dunameōs*”

NASB (formal equivalence)

“by the word of his power”

NIV (functional equivalence)

“by his powerful word”

Example: *mnēsteuomai* “engaged”
(Matt 1:18)

Historical Issue: The only way to break an engagement in Jewish context of first century is through divorce: *apoluō*--
(Matt 1:19)

CEV: “So (Joseph) decided to quietly call off the wedding.”

NASB (& most other translations): Keeps “engaged” and “divorce.”

anazōsamenoī tas osfuas (tēs dianoias)--“Girding the loins/waist [of your mind...]” (1 Peter 1:13)

Image: Long robes worn in one’s home; belted up when going out to allow for ease/quickness of movement.

This is an IDIOM.

NASB: “Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

NIV: “Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.”

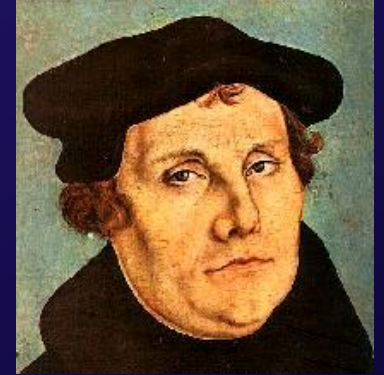
(NRSV—same initial clause)

Word Play: Lost in Translation

2 Cor 10:13: But we will not boast beyond *our* measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. (NASB)

“We won’t take pride in anything more than what is appropriate. Let’s look at the boundaries of our work area that God has assigned to us. It’s an area that includes you. (CEB)

Martin Luther on Bible translation:



“I must let the literal words go and try to learn how the German says that which the Hebrew [or Greek] expresses ...”

“Whoever would speak German must not use Hebrew style. Rather he must see to it—once he understands the Hebrew author – that he concentrates on the sense of the text, asking himself, ‘Pray tell, what do the Germans say in such a situation?’ ... let him drop the Hebrew words and express the meaning freely in the best German he knows.”

- **Use more than one translation, since no one translation is or can be perfect.**
- **Be kind to translators 😊**

“He who translated literally is a liar; and he who paraphrases is a blasphemer.”

--Rabbi ben Judah

“Translators are traitors.”

--Italian saying