DOI: https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2005.4.16.188

Ethnographies of Speaking and Bible Translation in Asian Contexts

Lourens de Vries*

1. Introduction

The term ethnography of speaking refers to all culturally and socially determined forms of language use: patterns of language use that both reflect and constitute cultural practices. Foley speaks of communicative relativism to denote the extent to which linguistic practices are determined by wider cultural practices and beliefs.[1] An example of a linguistic pattern that reflects and constitutes cultural practices are greetings. Foley compares Wolof greetings of West Africa and Australian greetings. Although these greetings are used in comparable social situations with at first sight similar social functions, they are totally different linguistic events. "A greeting is not simply a greeting; it is a forum in which to enact through linguistic practices the cultural ideologies of equality in Australia or inequality in West Africa."[2] Wolof is a stratified Muslim society of Senegal in which greeting rituals are used to negotiate social status among the interlocutors.[3] Other topics studied in ethnographies of speaking are crosscultural variations of Gricean Maxims, politeness and honorifics, social deixis, genre, and the linguistic construction of personhood.

For translators the area of the ethnography of speaking or cultural pragmatics is one of the most complex and demanding domains, also in translations from and to neighbouring or related languages like German and English.[4] The way translators

* United Bible Societies Asia Pacific Regional Translation Consultant, the professor of Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam

1) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics. An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 259.

2) Ibid., 259.

3) J. Irvine, "Strategies of Status Manipulation in the Wolof Greeting," R. Bauman and J. Sherzer eds., *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 167-191.

4) J. House, "Cross-cultural Pragmatics and Translation," A. Neubert and Gregory M. Shreve, eds., *Translation as Text* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992).

as intercultural communicators mediate between the source and target ethnographies of speaking is determined by skopos factors.

First I will introduce the notion of skopos or function of translations. Then I will give an example of a specific pattern of the ethnography of speaking of a biblical text, the book of Ruth, to show how skopos factors controlled the way Bible translators mediated between the different ethnographies of speaking of ancient Israel and target communities in the Netherlands. Next I will turn to Bible translation in Asian contexts and to the ways in which in Asian Bible translations these extremely complex an delicate problems have been handled. The domain of politeness and linguistic patterns of honorifics form perhaps the most complex translational issue within the domain of intercultural mediation for Bible translators in Asian contexts. This is the reason that many Asian languages reflect in elaborate ways cultural practices and values of politeness, sociocentrism and respect.

2. Translation functions and ethnographies of speaking

2.1. The skopos or target function of translations

For most translators it is almost a platitude to say that a single translation can never show all aspects of its source text. “It is, at least it almost always is, impossible to approximate all the dimensions of the original text at the same time.”[5] Translators have to choose and in that process inevitably some aspects of the source are lost. Furthermore, although some translations are excluded as wrong by the source text, there remains too much choice, since any text always can be translated in more than one way, with source texts legitimating these various ways of rendering the text. Source texts, however brilliantly analysed, ‘underdetermine’ their possible interpretations and translations, especially texts from Antiquity like the Bible.

Translators solve problems of selectivity and ‘underdetermination’ intrinsic to translation by invoking criteria *outside* their source texts. It is their only option, whether they are aware of it or not. These external criteria emerge from a complex and heterogeneous set of factors collectively referred to in translation studies as the

5) J. Ortega y Gasset, “The Misery and Splendor of Translation,” L. Venuti ed., *The Translation Studies Reader,* Esther Allen, trans. (London: Routledge, 2000), 62.

skopos or function of the translation in the target community. Take a simple Greek clause like *pantes (all) zētousin (seek) se (you)* in Mark 1:37. The Dutch *Nieuwe Vertaling* translates this clause as 'Allen (all) zoeken (seek) u (you)' and this translation shows one aspect of the source well, namely the syntax of the Greek clause but does not show the durative aspect that the Greek verb has in this verse. If translators decide to translate the durative aspect, there are various possibilities in Dutch, all equally supported by the source text. For example, the Dutch *Goed Nieuws Bijbel* has 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken' with the durative auxiliary *lopen* 'to walk', the *Nieuwe Bijbel Vertaling* has another construction (with a form of *zijn* 'to be': 'Iedereen is naar u op zoek', literally 'everyone is for you on the look'). But the versions that reflect the durative aspect cannot at the same time reflect the syntax of the Greek clause. Conveying both the durative aspect and the syntax of the Greek source in one Dutch clause is simply impossible. Translators have to decide which aspect of the source should get priority in the translation (selectivity).

At the same time this example shows the problem of 'underdetermination': the Greek source text legitimates multiple Dutch translations like 'Iedereen is naar u op zoek', 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken' en 'Allen zoeken u'. Translators are constantly confronted with such multiple legitimate possibilities and with source texts that are silent and refuse translators to tell which translation is the 'best'. When source texts fall silent, the translator has to turn away from it and find the answer elsewhere, and the answer is in the target or goal of the translation: what kind of text does the translator want to make, and for whom, and what kinds of things is his or her audience wanting to do with the text?

The term skopos was introduced to translation studies by Hans Vermeer[6] who views translation as action and grounded the idea of skopos not so much in selectivity and 'underdetermination' as I do but rather in the intrinsically purposive nature of all human action. For Christiane Nord "translation is the production of a functional target text maintaining a relationship with a given source text that is specified according to the intended or demanded function of the target text (translation skopos)".[7]

Now given the selectivity and 'underdetermination' of translations, how do

6) H. J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," L. Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader*, Andrew Chestermann, trans. (London: Routledge, 2000), 221.

7) Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Applications of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 28.

translators into Dutch decide whether to translate Mark 1:37 as 'Iedereen is naar u op zoek' or as 'Allen zoeken u' or as 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken'? Equivalence considerations cannot help them since all these translations can claim to be equivalent to some aspects of the source text and none is excluded by the source text, so they will have to take skopos considerations into account. The differences between the various Dutch translations follow from their skopos. For example, the Dutch *Goed Nieuws Bijbel* has a so called common language skopos. It is a translation primarily made for people outside the churches (external function). Accordingly, its translation of Mark 1:37 'Iedereen loopt u te zoeken' conveys what it means in common Dutch but does not show the form of the Greek syntax. The *Nieuwe Vertaling* of 1951 on the other hand has a church-internal skopos and was meant to function in church communities with inspiration theologies that extended the inspired nature of the Word of God to the language form of the source leading to the translation 'Allen zoeken u' that comes close to the form of the Holy Scriptures in this place and is good Dutch.

It is important to notice that source texts also *exclude* some translations like 'Sommigen (Some) zoeken (seek) u (you).' This is not trivial. In my understanding, the skopos approach is not necessarily a form of extreme relativism that wants to dethrone source texts. Following Nord[8] I use the skopos approach combined with a interpersonal loyalty notion ('function plus loyalty'). Loyalty to audiences and commissioners and loyalty to the writers of the source texts. Translating *pantes zetousin se* with 'some are looking for you' or with 'nobody is looking for you' would be disloyal to the obvious communicative intentions of the writer. With obvious intentions I mean intentions and meanings about which there is now and always has been consensus among those who can read biblical Greek. It is when the source text legitimates multiple interpretations and translations that skopos factors are needed to reach a decision, or when the translator is forced by the target language to choose between two aspects of the source that cannot be rendered in a single translation.

One can speak of function or skopos in relation to commissioners and translators who have certain skopoi or functional goals for the translation (*intended translation function*). For example a missionary may want to translate the Bible to plant a

8) Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful activity. Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 123.

church in a community. In the course of time translations may acquire different functions in target communities since once born they have a functional life of their own (*acquired functions*). For example, some so called common language versions of the Bible were meant for external functions, to bring the message of Scriptures close to modern, audiences outside the churches, but many church members of churches that use older, more literal versions in the liturgy use the common language versions for private or family reading, and in some church communities common language versions are used in church services also. Communities may have expectations of translations, they expect to be able to do certain things with the text (*expected functions*). This is a crucial factor in Bible translations where the various Christian communities such as Catholics, Pentecostals or Orthodox have different theologies of Scripture, essentially different notions of 'Bible'. Sufficient overlap between the intended function and the expected function is crucial for acceptance of any new version of the Bible in the various communities. For some communities the translation must reflect the transcendent otherness of God and the translation functions mainly in the liturgy where the text is celebrated and its public reading is a sacred ritual; communication of messages is not the aim. Other communities see the Bible as messages of God for humanity, messages that should be communicated as clearly as possible.

The French literary critic Gérard Genette coined the term paratext for elements added to a text such as notes, prefaces, titles, and dedications.[9] He restricted the term to those additions that reflect the intention of authors. Paratext is a crucial, often overlooked aspect of translations. One could, with Pym,[10] even define translations a genre of texts in which paratextual elements in some way or other distinguish between the translator and the original writer(s). Paratextual elements play a crucial role in Bible translations, perhaps more than in any other type of text. In many Bible translations the text is structured in chapters, verses and pericopes, with chapter and pericope titles; there are notes of several types. There may be a preface, maps, glossaries and so on. Bible books receive titles and are presented in a particular order. Although not devoid of paratextual elements, written texts in Antiquity, including biblical texts, had very little paratext compared to modern translations of the Bible. Paratextual elements often give very clear indications of

9) G. Genette, *Psalimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981).
10) A. Pym, *Method in Translation History* (Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 1998).

the functions of Bible translations,[11] not only in prefaces but also for example in the way the text is structured in pericopes. For example, translations with ecclesiastical functions often have pericope divisions that originate in the liturgy: certain passages were read at certain times of the year. Modern Bible translations that try to express the literary structure of the biblical literature and that have a literary function in the target culture have very different pericope divisions that guide the reader to the literary and rhetorical structure of the text.

The core of the skopos of Bible translations is formed by theological and hermeneutic elements that define the notion 'Bible' for a given community and that emerge from the specific spirituality of that community. Such complex and sometimes partly implicit notions of 'Bible' define the target or goal of every new translation of the Bible. It would be misleading to call such notions of 'Bible' and the resulting functions of Bible translations 'culture-specific' translation functions, rather they emerge from global religious traditions such as Orthodox or Evangelical traditions, although local skopos factors interact with these global translation functions. The various Jewish and Christian communities have created their own Bibles in the course of their histories of translation. These creative translation histories involve the selection of textual traditions, of books to be included in the Bible, views on the relationship between the human authors and the Divine Author of the Bible, and different answers to the crucial question of the hermeneutical division of labor between tradition/Church, individual believer and Bible translation.

The skopos approach allows us to link textual shifts in translations in a systematic fashion to extra textual factors, to institutional and cultural contexts in which translations function. The skopos approach is especially appropriate for the study of Bible translations because in major languages there are many Bible translations. This means that translation decisions can be studied both with respect to source texts and with respect to other translations. Observations of translation decisions can then be linked to various functions of the translations in target communities, as I will now illustrate with Dutch and English translations of the book of Ruth

11) L. de Vries, "Paratext and the Skopos of Bible Translations," W. F. Smelik, A. den Hollander and U. B. Schmidt, eds., *Paratext and Metatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Leiden, Boston: Brill Publishers, 2003), 176-193.

2.2. Skopos and the sociocentric ethnography of speaking in Ruth

Local conceptions of personhood have been studied in cultural anthropology in terms of egocentric and sociocentric ideologies.[12] In sociocentric communities persons are largely understood to be their social positions,[13] the person is a summation of the network of social roles and relations. Two misunderstandings should be cleared away immediately. First, there are crucial differences between the various sociocentric communities and these lead to different articulations of sociocentric understanding and ideology.[14] Second, sociocentric conceptions of personhood may co-occur with well-developed awareness of one's individuality. The Korowai and other egalitarian communities of New Guinea for example combine an emphasis on the physical and oratorical strenght of individuals as crucial for achieving authority with a sociocentric conception of personhood.[15]

Sociocentric conceptions of the person express themselves in various ways in language. Shweder and Bourne point out how the Oriyas of India tend to describe personalities in terms of a cases and context approach in which a person's behavior is characterized in social interactional context.[16] When a woman is described as friendly, this would take a form like, "she brings cakes to my family on festival days" or an agressive man as one who shouts curses at his neighbours. Although personal names may be used, people are preferably referred to and addressed in terms of kinship and descent, profession, class, or other socially relevant aspects of their position in the community. In some sociocentric communities this preference is so strong that using personal names is considered very inappropriate in most contexts.

Geertz defines the egocentric conception of the person along these lines: "The Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated

---

12) C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

13) Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics*, 269.

14) See, M. Rosaldo, "Towards an Anthropology of Self and Feeling," R. Shweder and R. Le Vine, ed., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 137-157.

15) L. de Vries and G. J. Van Enk, *The Korowai of Irian Java. Their Language in its Cultural Context* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

16) R. Shweder and E. Bourne, "Does the Concept of the Person vary Crossculturally?" R. Shweder and R. Le Vine, ed., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 158-199.

motivational cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgement, and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively both against other such wholes and against its social and natural background."[17] In Dutch society it considered essential to distinguish an individual sharply from his or her position in society. To "reduce" a person to a cluster of roles and positions would go against the fundamental value of the individual, autonomous person. People exchange personal names as soon as possible and these, rather than positional or relational terms, are then used to address and refer to people.

The Old Testament is a collection of writings originating in strongly sociocentric communities where a person is primarily seen from the perspective of social roles and relations, and of the prerogatives and obligations that go with these roles and relations. Since kinship and descent are a crucial factor in determining a person's social role and position, there is constant mentioning of the tribe or nation in which a person is born, the lineage, the family, kinship relations to socially or historically important persons. Besides genealogy, place of birth, profession or occupation, political affiliation or other things directly relevant to a person's social position may be mentioned.

In the little book of Ruth, participants like Boaz, Ruth and Naomi are good examples of persons that are referred to in sociocentric terms: there is a constant mentioning of their kinship relations, ethnic origin and the social obligations and prerogatives that go with their social position.

Take the dialogue between Naomi and Ruth when Ruth returns from the field of Boaz (2.19-22). At that point in the story the readers know very well that Naomi and Ruth relate to each other as mother-in-law and daugther-in-law. Yet the Hebrew text refers to Naomi and Ruth in 2.19 to 2.22 four times in four verses in terms of their affinal kinship relation, combining these kinship references with proper name references.

These 'redundant' sociocentric participant identifications are an example of a pragmatic pattern that is embedded in specific cultural practices. The cultural practice relevant in this case is rooted in sociocentric conceptions of the person, in the words of Foley: "… persons are largely understood to *be* their social positions. …"[18] It seems that, just like the societies of New Guinea that I lived in, ancient

17) C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge*, 59.
18) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics,* 269.

Israel viewed persons primarily in terms of their relational position in society. Genealogies, references to profession or role, membership of ethnic or political groups, are culturally crucial and the pragmatics of participant handling is embedded in these cultural practices.

This constant mentioning of a person's tribe, clan, family and so on, is highly redundant and 'unnatural' from the point of view of the pragmatics of redundancy in primary Dutch texts and accordingly the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* (GNB, 1988) eliminates the four references to the affinal kinship relation of Naomi and Ruth in 2:19-22 while retaining them in 2:18 and 2:23. The *Nieuwe Vertaling* (NV, 1951) follows the participant references of the Hebrew source:

NV 2.19a:	zei	haar	schoonmoeder	tot haar
	said	her	mother-in-law	to her
GNB 2.19a:	vroeg	Noomi..		
	asked	Naomi		
NV 2.19b:	vertelde	ze	haar	schoonmoeder
	told		she	her mother-in-law
GNB 2.19b:	vertelde		Ruth	
	told		Ruth	
NV 2.20:	zei	Naomi tot		haar schoondochter
	said	Naomi to		her daughter-in-law
GNB 2.20:	zei	Noomi		
	said	Naomi		
NV 2.22:	zei	Naomi	tot	Ruth, haar schoondochter
	said	Naomi	to	Ruth, her daughter-in-law
GNB 2.22:	zei	Noomi		
	said	Naomi		

By eliminating the repeated references to the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relation in these verses, the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* makes the story more like a story told in the Dutch way contrasting with the more sociocentric participant handling of the Hebrew source reflected in the *Nieuwe Vertaling*. The *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* sounds like a Dutch primary text but at a price: inasfar as the sociocentric pragmatics of person references is embedded in Hebrew cultural practices, the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* partly cuts that tie to the world behind the story of Ruth. The sociocentric ideology reflected in such person references is partly 'domesticated' to use the terminology of Venuti[19] and the 'foreign' sociocentric values are re-expressed to a certain extent in terms of the more familiar egocentric values of the target community. Hatim and Mason talk about a 'normalizing and neutralizing effect' in this context.[20]

The five references to the affinal relation between Ruth and Naomi in five verses of the *Nieuwe Vertaling* clearly constitute a violation of Dutch redundancy norms for primary texts and create pragmatic interference, making the text sound foreign, *at least in the ears of some audiences*. This last qualification is crucial since it points to the flexibility, openess and variability of the pragmatic component of languages: for some audiences perceiving the Dutch story of Ruth in the *Nieuwe Vertaling* as a secondary text, the foreigness is, paradoxically, natural. Mimetic traditions at the level of person references make it possible for church people raised in such traditions and for educated, secular audiences to suspend pragmatic norms derived from primary Dutch texts and to take the five 'redundant' references to the affinal relation in 2:19-23 as a linguistic reflex of cultural practices of other peoples, as the reflection in language of a different way of life, rather than as bad Dutch.

Ruth 1:4 tells us that Ruth is from Moab but so do 1:22; 2:2, 21 and 4:10. From a sociocentric perspective, the Moabite origin of Ruth is a central element in her identity and in the development of her identity: as often in the OT mentioning of sociocentric information has a spiritual and 'theological' dimension. Ruth's relationship to Israel and its God is portrayed against the background of Moab's relationship with Israel and its God and against that background Ruth comes to the statement so crucial in the development of her identity in the story in 1:16: 'your

19) L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995).
20) Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *The Translator as Communicator* (London: Routledge, 1997), 145.

people shall be my people and your God shall be my God'. The Moabitess Ruth is loyal to and chooses to follow her Israelite mother-in-law and her God.

Repeating the Moabite origin of Ruth all the time that the source mentions it sounds rather redundant in Dutch, especially in 2:2 so soon after the last mentioning in 1:22. In the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* of 1988, in 2:2 and 2:21 the apposition 'de Moabitische' is left out. In the last verse of chapter 1, the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* once again emphatically indicates the Moabite origin of Ruth and the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel* translators apparently felt it to be a violation of Dutch redundancy patterns to repeat the Moabite origin 'again' in the verses 2 and 21 of the second chapter.

We can understand the different ways in which these translations mediate between the ethnographies of speaking of the source and target communities in terms of their different functions in the target communities. A common language translation of Ruth, like the *Groot Nieuws Bijbel,* adjusts the sociocentric person references of the Hebrew source towards the egocentric person reference practices of the target audience but for other audiences that use the translation of Ruth to have access to a literary work of Antiquity, as a literary and cultural experience or for audiences that listen to the reading of the Bible at church, the translation would do well to retain the sociocentric flavour of the source. The resulting interference has a different communicative effect on this audience in that context of usage: they recognise the "strangeness" of the person references as a reflection of different cultural practices than their own.

3. Asian ethnographies of speaking and Bible translation

Many Asian speech communities have developed rich and elaborate linguistic means for the expression of social relations between speaker and addressee. Such linguistic practices reflect and constitute social and cultural practices of these communities and form the core of the ethnographies of speaking found in the region. Quite a few Asian languages developed elaborate systems of multiple speech levels (Korean, Balinese, Javanese) to express distinctions of respect, deference, solidarity and intimacy. Since Indo-european languages (including Greek) and Semitic languages (including Hebrew) have very different ethnographies of speaking without speech levels and elaborate honorifics, Bible translators who

translated into Asian languages have had to deal with these different ethnographies of speaking from the very beginning. I will give some examples of the fascinating ways in which translators struggled with their roles as intercultural mediators. First, I will discuss the first translation of the Bible into Javanese and the struggle to find proper speech levels and then I will turn to choices made in the area of forms of address in Malay Bibles.

3.1. Javanese speech levels: Gericke and his struggle with Kromo and Ngoko speech levels

The German J. F. Gericke (1799-1857), the first Bible translator of the Netherlands Bible Society working in Indonesia, is the translator of the first complete Bible in Javanese.[21] In 1823 he starts his training in the Netherlands studying biblical languages, Arabic and Malay and other topics. He arrives in 1827 in Java. In 1847 Gericke publishes his dictionary of Javanese and in 1848 the New Testament. Gericke regularly writes about the Javanese members of his translation team who were not only involved in teaching him Javanese and correcting his Javanese but also in drafting and checking the translation itself, people like Rd. Pandji Poespowilgo and Mas Pramadi. When Gericke's laudatory reports on Rd. Bagoes Moedjarat reach the Board of the Netherlands Bible Society, they propose that Rd. Moedjarat become directly employed by the Netherlands Bible Society.

Gericke also extensively wrote about the problems caused by the presence of speech levels in Javanese that reflect social relationships of hierarchy and solidarity (Kromo and Ngoko). Many factors enter the choice of level in Javanese, such as social status relation between speaker and addressee, their relative ages, degree of acquaintance and so on. When the Biblical source texts present dialogues, the rank differences between the interlocutors must be reflected in the choice of Kromo and Ngoko speech levels. For example how does Jesus speak to his mother in John 2:3? First Gericke decides it should be the Kromo level: "De kinderlijke eerbied jegens de ouders vereist volstrekt het Kromo" (The respect of the child in relation to the parents absolutely requires the Kromo).[22] But later he switches to Ngoko because it

21) Section 3.1 is based on Swellengrebel 1974-1978.

22) J. L. Swellengrebel, *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor. Anderhalve Eeuw Bijbelvertaling en Taalkunde in de Indonesische Talen.* I (1820-1900) (Amsterdam, Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1978), 80.

would express “vertrouwelijkheid en zachte terechtwijzing” (intimacy and mild rebuke). It is clear that these obligatory relationship distinctions of Javanese, reflected not just in pronoun choices or forms of address but also in choice of lexical items, particles, conjunctions and so on, imply important exegetical decisions and make the Javanese text more specific in this respect than the Hebrew and Greek sources. Interesting is also the choice of Ngoko or Kromo for the writer of the biblical texts. Luke writes his Gospel for the “most excellent Theophilus”, “kratiste Theophile” in the Greek and there the Greek form of address makes abundantly clear that the addressee’s of Luke’s writing was (much) higher socially than Luke leading to Luke using Kromo.

But in other writings the case is less clear. Initially Gericke chooses Kromo for other books, the idea being that the audiences for those writings must have contained at least some people of high rank. Later Gericke lets the biblical writers generally use Ngoko arguing that the Spirit of God is the writer of the Bible, that Ngoko has more expressive possibilities (being the unmarked, basic form of the language) and that Kromo overemphasizes the subordinate status of the biblical writers.

3.2. Feeling uneasy in Indonesian: second person pronouns and forms of address in Indonesian Bibles

For the overwhelming majority of the speakers of Indonesian, the national language of Indonesia, Indonesian is their second language. For example, the combined population of Java, Lombok and Bali represents more than 60% of all speakers of Indonesian, and it is in the first languages of these islands that speech levels and the linguistic pragmatics of politeness and social hierarchy are essential. The ethnographies of speaking of languages like Javanese strongly influences the way these speakers use Indonesian. Ugang and Soesilo point out how first language interaction with Indonesian complicates Bible translation in Indonesian in the domain of politeness, honorifics and speech levels.[23] Take the speakers of Indonesian that have Javanese as mother tongue. “Lacking the exact Indonesian equivalent for the Javanese Kromo term *panjenengan* ‘you’, Javanese Indonesians

23) Hermogenes Ugang and Soesilo Daud, “Are Honorific Terms of Address Necessary in the Indonesian Bible?” *The Bible Translator* 42:4 (1991), 442-447.

will use terms of address such as Bapak 'father', Ibu 'mother', Tuan 'master', or Nyonya 'madam' to show respect … no Javanese will ever use the pronouns *engkau* or *kamu* to address a second person who has a higher status than the speaker. With this perspective Indonesians of Javanese background feel uneasy when *engkau* and *-mu* are used to address God or Jesus".[24] But this is exactly what happens in the standard Indonesian version, the *Terjemahan Baru*. Take the translation of Mark 1:37 *pantes (all) zetousin (seek) se (you, sg)*. In the *Terjemahan Baru* (1987, TB) version this rendered as "Semua (all) orang (people) mencari (seek) Engkau (you)". The TB version as a rule tries to stay close to the (syntactic) form of the Greek, rendering nouns with nouns, pronouns with pronouns and so on, and preserving where possible Greek word order, just like other major formal translations. Since the Greek word order has a second person personal pronoun in this clause *(se)*, the Indonesian TB translates with the second person pronoun *engkau* which sounds rude and impolite in this context where Simon and other disciples are addressing their *guru* Jesus, their religious teacher, their rabbi. But for Indonesian speakers with Papuan backgrounds the use of *engkau* to address God or Jesus does not sound impolite or marked at all. They use second person pronouns in ways comparable to biblical Greek, often in combination with kinship terms to address people in polite fashion.

The Indonesian translation *Kabar Baik* (1985, BIS) renders Mark 1:37 as "Semua orang sedang mencari Bapak". The BIS version is a common language version that is meaning-oriented and emphasizes clarity and naturalness. Naturalness implies adjustment to the ethnography of speaking of its target audience. Since the majority of its intended audience would never address a religious teacher and leader with the second person pronoun *engkau*, the BIS version uses the polite and respectful form of address *Bapak* (Father, Sir).

Again, it is the skopos or function of these Indonesian versions that determines how the translators mediated between the ethnographies of speaking of source and target communities. There is an extra complication for translators into Indonesian because there is no uniform ethnography of speaking: there are significant regional differences in the ways Indonesia is used.

---

24) Ibid., 444.

3.3. Globalisation of ethnographies of speaking: another look at Ruth

In subtle ways the ethnography of speaking of (American) English is manifesting itself increasingly in the way speakers of my native tongue, Dutch, use their language, for example in forms of address and forms of greetings, in the role of personal names in reference and address, and so on. The more egalitarian American ethnography of speaking replaces older forms of using Dutch that reflected a more hierarchical society with a far less egalitarian ethnography of speaking. It seems very likely that Asian speech communities similarly experience the dynamics of globalisation, especially in younger speakers that feel attracted to (certain) aspects of the American way of life. Of course, the ways in which such influences are absorbed and responded to, are highly dependent on existing cultural frameworks: foreign influences are always filtered and adapted in the process of absorption.

Let us now have another look at the passage discussed above, Ruth 2:19-22, in two English versions and one Indonesian version.

First, in the King James Version:

> [19] "And her *mother in law* said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take notice of thee. And she shewed *her mother in law* with who she had wrought and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz. [20] And Naomi said unto *her daughter in law*, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen. [21] And Ruth, *the Moabitess*, said, He said unto me also. Thou shalt keep fast by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest. [22] And Noami said unto Ruth, *her daughter in law*, It is good, *my daughter*, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field."

Notice that kin terms for mother-in-law and daughter-in-law occur four times in these four verses, just as in the Hebrew text, and that Ruth is referred to as Ruth, the Moabitess in 21. The sociocentric ethnography of speaking is transformed to a egocentric one in the Common English Version, for example in verse 19 the

Common English Version uses only personal names (Naomi and Ruth) where the Hebrew and the King James use kinship terms.

> [19] *Naomi* said, Where did you work today? Whose field was it? God bless the man who treated you so well! Then *Ruth* told her that she had worked in the field of a man named Boaz. [20] The LORD blesses Boaz! *Naomi* replied. He has shown that he is still loyal to the living and to the dead. Boaz is a close relative, one of those who is supposed to look after us. [21] *Ruth* told her, Boaz even said I could stay in the field with his workers until they had finished gathering all his grain. [22] *Naomi* replied, My daughter, it's good that you can pick up grain alongside the women who work in his field. Who knows what might happen to you in someone else's field!

In the whole book of Ruth the Common English Version removed 8 out of the 10 mothers in law. The constant sociocentric mentioning of a person's tribe, clan, family relationship and so on, is highly redundant and 'unnatural' from the point of view of the ethnography of speaking of English and is accordingly transformed.

The Indonesian common language version BIS renders the passage in Ruth 2 as follows:

> [19] Maka berkatalah *Naomi* kepadanya, "Di mana kau mendapat semuanya ini? Di ladang siapa kau bekerja hari ini? Semoga Allah memberkati orang yang berbuat baik kepadamu itu!"
>
> Maka *Rut* menceritakan kepada *Naomi* bahwa ladang tempat ia memungut gandum itu adalah milik seorang laki-laki bernama Boas.
>
> [20] "Nak, orang itu keluarga dekat kita sendiri," kata *Naomi*. "Dialah yang harus bertanggung jawab atas kita. Semoga TUHAN memberkati dia. TUHAN selalu menepati janji-Nya, baik kepada orang yang masih hidup maupun kepada mereka yang sudah meninggal." *
>
> [21] Kemudian *Rut* berkata lagi, "Bu, orang itu mengatakan juga bahwa saya boleh terus memungut gandum bersama para pekerjanya sampai hasil seluruh ladangnya selesai dituai."
>
> [22] "Ya, nak," jawab *Naomi* kepada *Rut*, "memang lebih baik kau bekerja bersama para pekerja wanita di ladang Boas. Sebab, kalau kau pergi ke ladang orang lain, kau bisa diganggu orang di sana!"

Just like the Dutch and English common language versions discussed above the Indonesian common language version (BIS) transforms the sociocentric references of the Hebrew to egocentric ones: in verse 21 the apposition “the Moabitess” is removed and the four references to the mother/daughter in law relationship found in the Hebrew are also removed.

Now if it is true that Indonesian society generally speaking can be characterized as sociocentric, why would the Indonesian common language version transform the sociocentrism of the source into a egocentric target text? Two answers are possible. The first would be that the Indonesian common language versions, like the Dutch, is influenced by the English model translations like the Good News Bible and the Common English Version, the mothers of all common language versions.

This may be partially true but notice that the Indonesian BIS is quite independent from the English models in other respects, for example in the use of the forms of address “nak” (“child”) and “Bu” (“mother”). Therefore I am inclined to give another answer. The opposition sociocentric (East) versus egocentric (West) is too simplifying and does not take into account that Western and Asian societies have very intensive contacts and exchanges of people, ideas, foods, clothing and so on. This causes the picture to be much more dynamic and complicated. Just like in Dutch there is an increase of the use of personal names in Indonesian in various contexts, following the American ethnography of speaking, where in the recent past personal names would be avoided or used in combination with respectful forms like Pak and Bu. If this is true this complicates the work of Bible translators in languages like Indonesian and Korean because the rules governing speech levels or forms of address are no longer stable and predictable and may vary within the speech community, for example younger urban people with a lot of education may be much more influenced by egalitarian norms from American English than, say, older persons living far from the cities.

For national languages such as Indonesian this would mean that not only there are regional differences in the area of the ethnography of speaking (for example differences between Javanese and Papuan speakers of Indonesian) but that there are also differences between speakers caused by different exposure to languages such as American English.

4. Conclusions

Linguistics in the second half of the 20th century, the time when Nida and Naber wrote their influential books on Bible translation, was dominated by people like Noam Chomsky and by the quest for universals, especially universal *formal* properties of language *systems,* mostly in the area of syntax. Towards the end of the 20th century attention shifted back from language system to language use, from formal universals to functional differences. As long as the scholarly eye is focused on formal syntax, universals come to the fore but as soon as attention is payed to patterns of language *use,* there is renewed attention for the ways linguistic practices reflect and constitute cultural differences. This shift has important consequences for scholarly reflection on Bible translation. The way Hebrew and Greek are used in biblical texts reflects cultural practices. At the same time their target languages are interwoven with the cultural practices of target communities. Translators have to make difficult decisions in the way they mediate between the ethnographies of speaking of source and target communities. Bible translators always work in specific times and places and for specific audiences that want to do specific things with the translated Bibles. It is these functions of the Bible in target communities that determine the ways translators carry out their roles as intercultural mediators.

* Keyword

ethnographies, pragmatics, skopos, honorifics, Asian context, Bible translation.

* References

Foley, W. A., *Anthropological Linguistics. An Introduction,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.

Gasset, J. Ortega y., "The Misery and Splendor of Translation", L. Venuti ed., *The Translation Studies Reader,* Esther Allen, trans., London: Routledge, 2000.

Geertz, C., *Local Knowledge,* New York: Basic Books, 1983.

Genette, G., *Psalimpsestes: La Littérature au Second Degré,* Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981.

Hatim, Basil and Mason, Ian., *The Translator as Communicator,* London: Routledge, 1997.

House, J., "Cross-cultural Pragmatics and Translation", A. Neubert and Gregory M. Shreve, eds., *Translation as Text,* Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1992.

Irvine, J., "Strategies of Status Manipulation in the Wolof Greeting", R. Bauman and J. Sherzer eds., *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974.

Nord, Christiane., *Text Analysis in Translation Theory, Methodology, and Didactic Applications of a Model for Translation-Oriented Text Analysis,* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991.

Nord, Christiane., *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained,* Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997.

Pym, A., *Method in Translation History,* Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 1998.

Rosaldo, M., "Towards an Anthropology of Self and Feeling", R. Shweder and R. Le Vine, ed., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Shweder, R. and Bourne, E., "Does the Concept of the Person vary Crossculturally?" R. Shweder and Le Vine, R., ed., *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self and Emotion,* Cambridge: C.U.P., 1984.

Swellengrebel, J. L., *In Leijdeckers Voetspoor. Anderhalve Eeuw Bijbelvertaling en Taalkunde in de Indonesische Talen*. I (1820-1900), Amsterdam, Haarlem: Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1978.

Ugang, Hermogenes and Soesilo, Daud., "Are Honorific Terms of Address

Necessary in the Indonesian Bible?" *The Bible Translator* 42:4 (1991).

Venuti, L., *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation,* London: Routledge, 1995.

Vermeer, H. J., "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," L. Venuti, ed., *The Translation Studies Reader,* Andrew Chestermann, trans., London: Routledge, 2000.

de Vries, L., "Paratext and the Skopos of Bible translations," W. F. Smelik, A. den Hollander and Schmidt, U. B., eds., *Paratext and Metatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions.* Leiden, Boston: Brill Publishers, 2003.

de Vries, L. and van Enk, G. J., *The Korowai of Irian Java. Their Language in its Cultural Context.* Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

<Abstract>

말하기의 민족 기술학(記述學)과 아시아 맥락에서의 성경 번역

라우런스 드 프리스
(세계성서공회연합회 아시아태평양지역 번역 컨설턴트)

번역에 있어서 번역자가 언제나 직면하는 문제는 선택의 문제이다. 한 번역이 원문의 뜻을 다 드러내 줄 수 없는 까닭에 이것은 필연적이다. 어떠한 선택을 할 때에 고려해야 하고 영향을 주는 영역 중에 하나가 바로 말하기의 민족 기술학(記述學) 혹은 문화적 화용론이다. 이 용어는 문화적, 사회적으로 결정된 언어 사용의 모든 형태들을 가리킨다. 곧, 각 민족의 문화적 관습들을 반영하기도 하고 구성하기도 하는 언어 사용의 형태를 가리키는 것이다. 번역자들에게 있어 말하기의 민족 기술학 혹은 문화적 화용론의 영역은 가장 복잡하면서도 많은 것을 요구하는 영역들 중의 하나이다. 번역자들이 서로 다른 문화, 곧 원문 속의 문화와 번역되어야 할 언어가 속한 문화-간의 전달자들로서 원문과 말하기의 민족 기술학 대상사이를 중재하는 방식은 목적(skopos) 요소들에 의해 결정되어 진다. 곧 번역하는 목적이 무엇이냐에 따라서 번역자가 선택하는 번역도 영향을 받고 달라진다는 것이다.

본 글은 먼저 번역들의 목적(skopos) 혹은 기능의 개념을 소개하고, 그 후에 한 성경 본문, 곧 룻기- 특별히 2장 19에서 22절을 중심으로 하여 말하기의 민족 기술학의 구체적인 형태의 한 예를 제시하고 있다. 동일한 본문이 번역의 목적에 따라서 동일한 언어로 번역되면서도 어떻게 다른 방식으로 번역되는지를 드러낸다. 이 때에 민족 기술학 곧 문화적 화용론도 번역 목적과 어우러져 번역에 영향을 미친다. 특히 아시아 맥락에서 말하기의 민족 기술학이 관심을 끄는 것은 아시아 언어에서 공손과 존대법, 상하관계에 따른 언어 사용법 등이 복잡하면서도 잘 발달되어 있기 때문이다. 이것이 바로 많은 아시아 언어들이 정중함과 사회 중심주의, 그리고 존중의 문화적 관습들과 가치들을 정교한 방식들로 반영하고 있는 이유이다.

따라서 저자는 마지막으로 성서 번역에 있어서 말하기의 민족 기술학이 주목을 받고 있음을 강조하면서 성경 원문의 말하기의 민족 기술학과 성경 번역을 사용할 대상 공동체 사이를 중재하는 데 있어서 결정적인 요인은 번역의 목적임을 다시 한번 상기시킨다.

(정창욱)