

The Contribution of Linguistics to Bible Translation Yesterday and Today: Part 1

Ronald Ross*

1. Introduction

The study of human language, known as linguistics, has long been a fundamental part of the training of translators, especially those who work in the field of Bible translation. In the past, many of these translators were not native speakers of the target language, but rather foreign missionaries who usually had no knowledge of the language at the beginning of the project. Consequently, they typically spent several years taking courses in descriptive structural linguistics and data gathering methods and then many more years living in the community while learning and analysing the language.

After arriving at the community, they would begin collecting vocabulary and simple phrases to serve as a basis for phonological and grammatical analysis. Often they would write dictionaries and descriptions of the language's phonology, morphology and syntax which would then be published, mostly for the benefit of other linguists. At such translation projects, the foreign missionaries were the translators, and though they required the assistance of native speakers usually called "language helpers", these native speakers rarely received any serious training themselves. Their contribution was limited to input based on their native intuition.

Today, more and more translations are being done by mother-tongue translators rather than by missionary translators, making the need for years of language learning and grammatical description unnecessary. This change has made some wonder whether the study of linguistics has outlived its usefulness for Bible translation. It is probably true that today there is less need for the type of linguistic training that has traditionally been provided and which prepared the foreign linguist/translator to collect a copious lexicon of the target language and elicit data

* United Bible Societies Americas Area Translation Consultant

that would allow him or her to make accurate descriptions of its phonology, morphology and syntax. However, it is the purpose of this paper to argue that linguistics still has plenty to offer translators, be they native speakers of the target language or not. I will also argue that certain subdisciplines of the field have been underexploited.

Different linguists conceive of language in different ways, and the way in which they do is determined fundamentally by their presuppositions about what language is and about what kinds of linguistic data are scientifically interesting. The answers to these questions determine in turn the nature of their research, the kinds of questions they will ask themselves and, finally, the kinds of conclusions they can reach. Differences of opinion about such things is the reason that linguistic science is so fragmented.

In this paper we will examine a number of subdisciplines of the field that seem particularly relevant to translation, especially those that have undergone major development over the past few decades. though the subdisciplines dealt with doubtless reflect the special interests of the author, there has been an effort to achieve as much breadth as possible within the available space.

We will not consider formal theories of linguistics, since their direct contribution the translation theory and practice seems to be minimal. Most formal approaches draw a pretty tight circle around what they consider legitimate linguistic inquiry. They are primarily concerned with sentence grammar, concentrate on competence to the exclusion of performance, assign meaning to only one component of the grammar and disregard the effects of context on structure and meaning. This suggests less fruitful ground for people who are looking to linguistics for help in dealing with the translation of texts. Noam Chomsky publicly expressed his doubt that generative linguistics had much to offer at all in this regard.¹⁾

In what follows, I will briefly point out the differences between linguistic universalism and linguistic relativity and why this is relevant to translation. Then I will discuss various subdisciplines of linguistics that I deem to be relevant to a theory of translation and proceed to give an example or two to show how this might be so.

1) Noam Chomsky (1988: 180) expressed the view that linguistics had little to offer people involved in practical endeavors such as translation and language teaching in response to a question put to him while delivering his Managua Lectures, and was presumably referring to generative linguistics. An exception to this narrow view of language in formal theories would be role and reference grammar developed by Robert Van Valin.

2. Universalism versus Relativity

One of the issues that most divide the field of linguistics today is that of *universalism* and *relativity*. Universalism assumes that underlying structure of all languages are pretty much alike, cut from the same mould, as it were. One approach posits universal principles that explain the general likeness of languages and explain the differences as simply language specific parameters or levers that must be pulled by the language learner when acquiring a specific native language. It is assumed that language structure in the main is acquired genetically and that all languages share a universal semantic structure and underlying syntactic structure.²⁾ Whatever can be said in one language can be said in any other. Regarding the lexicon, Noam Chomsky claims that “there is no clear alternative to the assumption that the acquisition of vocabulary is guided by a rich and invariant conceptual system which is prior to any experience”³⁾

Relativists argue that languages differ far more than universalists concede and that they reflect grammatically and lexically many of their speakers’ assumptions about the world around them. In its stronger versions, it is assumed that languages *determine* to some degree the conceptual system of a linguistic community by leading their speakers to perceive some aspects of their reality, while concealing others from them. This is in essence what Boas, Sapir and Whorf⁴⁾ believed and taught during the first half of the twentieth century, and the idea that concepts are largely language determined goes back at least as far as Humboldt, in the early nineteenth century.

With the death — in the space of five years — of Boas, Sapir and Whorf and the birth of generative grammar, linguistic relativity fell upon hard times. Chomsky was bent on turning linguistics into a “hard” science, and science was supposed to be a generalizing rather than a particularizing enterprise. The quest was for *universal grammar* (UG), and to focus on variation, especially at the level of cognition, was considered irresponsible science⁵⁾. Linguistic relativity could scarcely be mentioned

2) See for example Kayne’s (1994) assertion that all of the world’s languages S[vp VO] structure underlyingly (cited in Van Valin and La Polla [1997]).

3) Noam Chomsky, *Language in a Psychological Setting* (Tokyo: Sophia Linguistica, 1987), 22.

4) The groundwork for the theory of linguistic relativity was laid by Boas, but it was developed further by Whorf and Sapir. It was Whorf who expressed the strongest version of the theory and called it the theory of ‘linguistic relativity’ (Lucy, 1992).

in polite company.

Lately, linguistic relativity has been making a comeback, and has been closely associated with cognitive linguistics.⁶⁾ In a recent issue of *Language*,⁷⁾ one of the main articles and two of the book reviews had to do with linguistic relativity, and linguists such as Steven Levinson, John Gumperz, John Lacy, Elinor Ochs, William Foley, Dan Slobin and George Lakoff are among those who have lent their names to the cause. Today's linguistic relativity is not necessarily a carbon copy of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Much greater emphasis is now placed on empirical research, and some of those who do research in this area would not agree that languages *determine* aspects of a community's perception of their reality, preferring instead to talk in terms of *influence*. Still others would argue that it is culture that impacts language. Whichever way it is, — and it may be both ways — there is a growing body of evidence that languages differ in intriguing ways that reflect equally intriguing differences in how people see and classify their world.⁸⁾

The position one adopts with respect to the linguistic universalism versus linguistic relativity debate will ultimately influence one's position regarding crucial issues in translation theory as well. The assumption that languages can differ widely to reflect widely differing cultures and world views seems heuristically more productive for a translation theory than the assumption that all languages are underlyingly very similar and share a common semantic structure. Needless to say, this does not imply that language diversity is totally free from constraints or that there are not numerous linguistic universals, a patently untenable position.

2.1. Metaphor

One popular example of this approach is George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's

5) George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 304.

6) Palmer (1996) suggests that cognitive linguistics could be viewed as the 'modern revival' of the Boasian approach to linguistics, except for its lesser interest in culture and the ethnography of speaking. See also Alessandro Duranti, *Linguistic Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) and William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

7) September 1998, volume 74, num. 3

8) See George Lakoff (1987: 305ff) for an enlightening review of different concepts of and approaches to linguistic relativity.

Metaphors We Live By (1980), in which they argue that metaphor is more than a rhetorical device employed in literary art forms. Rather, important concepts that people use to their world are conceptualized metaphorically. The authors are not talking about isolated metaphors, but rather entire networks of metaphors or *metaphor themes*, and they give numerous examples such as the *time is money* metaphor, common in Western civilization. We can *spend time, waste time, lose time, invest time, save time, give somebody our time, live on borrowed time*, etc. Another example is the *argument as war* metaphor. When we engage in arguing, we *take different positions, we attack someone's ideas, we win, we lose, we retreat, we defeat or shoot down someone's arguments*, etc. For Lakoff and Johnson, the very essence of metaphor is experiencing one thing in terms of another. And metaphor themes such as *time is money* or *argument as war* constitute frames that lend coherence to a large number of lexical collocations that would otherwise have to be viewed as exceptional or highly marked cases of lexical items. The authors argue further that metaphor themes are not arbitrary, but rather reflect the way that speakers perceive and experience the world around them: "In actuality, we feel that no metaphor can ever be comprehended or even adequately represented independently of its experiential basis."⁹⁾

To affirm that metaphor themes are not arbitrary in no way implies that different cultures share the same ones. Certainly the members of different cultures perceive and experience the world around them in dissimilar ways, and come up with their own peculiar metaphor themes. Lakoff and Johnson ask us to consider a culture in which argument is viewed as a dance. In such a case, the participants would not be seen as at war, but rather as performers they would have to execute their performance in a "balanced and aesthetically pleasing way." It would not look like an argument to us at all, and we may assume that they are engaged in some other kind of activity.

Translators have always known that metaphors from one culture often do not work in a translation for another and dealing with metaphors and figurative language in general has always been a part of UBS training workshops. What is interesting in Lakoff and Johnson is the pervasiveness of metaphor and existence of metaphor themes, which translationally are more challenging than metaphors in

9) George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 19.

isolation. One question that remains is whether metaphor is so inextricably interwoven into the fabric of all languages. Some Mayan languages seem to be relatively unfriendly hosts to figurative language.

2.2. Spatial Orientation

An area of particular interest to linguists working within the realm of linguistic relativity or cognitive linguistics is that of spatial orientation (e.g. Foley, 1997; Levinson, 1996; Pederson et al, 1998). Apparently all languages have *absolute* spatial orientation, based on cardinal directions, whatever form these may take in a given language (*north, east, where the sun comes up, toward the mountains, down river, toward the ocean*). Many languages, but by no means all, have *relative* spatial orientation as well, based on positions relative to the human body, usually the speaker's. In such languages, locations are often expressed as being *behind* or *in front of* the speaker or to the speaker's *right* or *left*. This is especially true when the location is nearby. The point of reference need not be the speaker. It can be projected onto someone or something else (*behind the table, to the right of the oak tree*).

In languages lacking relative spatial orientation, all locations are expressed in terms of cardinal directions. This, of course, implies that the speakers of such languages must have nearly perfect bearing at all times, and indeed this has been shown to be the case. Pederson et al. (1998) carried out a series of nonlinguistic experiments to determine whether a speaker's cognitive frame of reference corresponds to his linguistic frame of reference. In other words, they wanted to test whether or not the speakers of languages that differ typologically with respect to spatial orientation differ in a corresponding way with respect to their perception of space and resultant behavior. Spatial orientation is an important testing ground for linguistic relativity because space is something that presumably all humans beings experience in the same way, so differences cannot be attributed to dissimilarity in culture or environment. Pederson and his colleagues believe their research demonstrates a language-to-conceptualization directionality.

The findings from these experiments clearly demonstrate that a community's use of linguistic coding reliably correlates with the way the individual conceptualizes and memorizes spatial distinctions for nonlinguistic purposes.

Because we find linguistic relativity effects in a domain that seems basic to human experience and is directly linked to universally shared perceptual mechanisms, it is likely that similar correlations between language and thought will be found in other domains as well.¹⁰⁾

It is also clear that such correlations have implications for translation theory, whenever there is a mismatch of conceptual schemata between the source and receptor languages. For instance, the biblical languages have both absolute and relative spatial orientations and both commonly occur in the biblical text. Therefore it is not difficult to come up with numerous passages that would prove problematic for translation into a language such as Tzeltal (Mayan, Mexico), which has only absolute spatial orientation. Take, for instance, Ezekiel's description of his vision of the four winged beings all facing different directions.

Each living creature had four different faces: a human face in front, a lion's face at the right, a bull's face at the left, and an eagle's face at the back (TEV).

People who lack relative spatial orientation use absolute terms as in: *Pass me the salt. It's over there, just south of the bowl of rice.* One could say something like, "They had a human face to the north, a lion's face to the east, a bull's face to the west and an eagle's face (presumably) to the south." But Ezekiel the text gives no indication as to which direction each of the winged beings is facing, so one would be forced to make arbitrary choices. And what does 'facing' mean when a being has four faces all looking different directions. One could even ask if it makes much sense to talk in terms of cardinal directions referring to a dream. Probably the best option would be to undertranslate and put something like, "each had four faces on its head. On one side they had a human face, on another, a lion's face ...". This is undertranslating because it gives us no real idea of the organization of the faces on the heads, whereas the Hebrew text does.

Referring specifically to translation problems, Lakoff says essentially that the possibility of translation between two languages depends on the existence of common conceptual systems (the commensurability problem).¹¹⁾ Probably no

10) Eric Pederson, et al., "Semantic Typology and Spatial Conceptualization", *Language* 74:3 (1998).

11) George Lakoff, "Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things", 311ff.

languages have totally disparate conceptual schemata, so translation is possible, as we know. But there can be no doubt that translation problems arise at those points where there are mismatches. Foley observes:

Because translation requires moving the categories of the alien system into those of our own, this imposes constraints on how radically different the alien system can be. If completely incompatible, even partial translation should be impossible. The fact that a fair degree of translation between conceptual schemes across languages and cultures does seem possible indicates that at least some minimal commonalities do exist. But this should not blind us to the wide gulf between them. Quine emphasizes that languages are systems; we are not trying to match the meanings of words across the systems, but the conceptual schemes these belong to — a much taller order, as this implies aligning the systems as wholes.¹²⁾

Mismatching conceptual schemata between source and receptor languages are a genuine source of problems for the translator that need to be addressed in any theory of translation. Strategies for identifying them and then dealing with them should be included in the training workshops of all UBS translation teams.

3. Typology

Linguistic typology attempts to lump languages into types on the basis of structural commonalities. Nowadays typology is concerned with practically all aspects of language, even at the discourse level.

3.1. Constituent Order Typology

One of the most traditional concerns has been the order of constituents at the clause level or words at the phrase level. At the clause level, the overwhelming majority of the world's languages have one of the following three basic (i.e. unmarked) constituent orders: Verb Subject Object (VSO), Subject Verb Object

12) William A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 171.

(SVO) or Subject Object Verb (SOV). This does not mean, for example, that in a VSO language, only that order occurs. It means that this is the unmarked, most neutral, most expectable order in that language, and that when speakers deviate from it, they are communicating something of pragmatic import to the hearer. English is now an SVO language, but certainly other *marked* orders are possible and occur all the time, as can be seen from examples: 1a-b

- [1] a. I like tofu (SVO)
 b. Tofu I like (OSV)

These two sentences are semantically identical, but pragmatically distinct and would be used in different contextual circumstances. It would behoove a translator who is translating from an SVO language like Spanish into, say, a VSO language like Garifuna (Arawak, Honduras) to be acutely aware of this typological difference. Garifuna permits SVO when there is a pragmatic need to confer special prominence on the subject. However, it is easy to imagine the serious consequences of an ingenuous Garifuna translator reproducing the *unmarked* SVO order of Spanish as a *marked* SVO order in Garifuna. As she translates, it is unlikely that any single instance of this mistranslation would sound very wrong to her. But the overall impact on the discourse would be calamitous, and when she reviews her work, it would no doubt sound strange to her, though she may not know how to correct the problem. Certainly to ensure as high a degree of pragmatic similarity as is possible between the source text and the receptor text, workshops should include training with respect to the unmarked constituent orders of both the source and target languages and the kinds of pragmatic changes that occur in each when marked orders are chosen. Care should be taken to translate unmarked orders with unmarked ones and marked orders with marked ones of similar pragmatic effect.

Constituent orders are not just interesting in and of themselves, but also because in some cases they allow us to predict other aspects of a language.¹³⁾ For example, if a language has a VO order, one can be fairly confident that it also has prepositions, whereas OV languages like Korean will more likely have postpositions. This is not

13) Predictions regarding the presence or absence of a specific linguistic parameter based on other linguistic parameters are known amongst typologists as implicational universals. This kind of linguistic universal was developed initially by Joseph Greenberg. An example would be: if a language has a trial number, it also has a dual. If it has a dual, it also has a plural.

too helpful — even if the source language and the receptor language are typologically different, in this regard — since few translators are likely to start tacking prepositions onto the end of nouns in the receptor language just because the source language has postpositions. However, an awareness of other typological information — predicted by word order — can be crucial, because the differences they signal are nowhere nearly so mechanical nor so easy to deal with as adpositions. Basic word order also gives us clues as to what the marked and unmarked order of nouns and modifiers will be and can help to avoid translating unmarked orders with marked ones or vice versa.

In current linguistic theory, the term *head* refers to the element that determines the syntactic character of a constituent. So the head of a noun phrase is the noun, the head of a verb phrase, the verb, etc. Theo Vennemann (cited by Comrie, 1989) noticed a universal tendency for VO languages to be *head-initial*. (i.e. for the head to be the first element in the phrase) and for OV languages to be *head-final* (i.e. for the head to be the final element in the phrase).¹⁴⁾

John R. Roberts (1997), a specialist in the languages of Papua-New Guinea, shows just how important this typology can be to translators. He is working with biblical Greek and Amele. Greek is a VSO language,¹⁵⁾ and therefore head-initial. Amele is SOV and therefore a head-final language. It happens that the head-initial/head-final contrast has profound consequences because it predicts the order in which these two types of language express the following kinds of relationships:

VSO (Greek)	SOV (Amele)
RESULT-reason	reason-RESULT
RESULT-means	means-RESULT
MEANS-purpose	purpose-MEANS
MEANS-neg purpose	neg purpose-MEANS

14) The terms “head-initial” and “head-final” were not used by Vennemann, who preferred the more technical terms “operand-operator languages” and “operator-operand languages” respectively.

15) The VSO status of Ancient Greek is a judgement of Roberts. However Greenberg (1966) also classifies it thus, as do T. Friberg (1982) and Stephen Levinsohn (forthcoming). Greenberg does not specify that he is referring to Ancient Greek, though I presume that he is, since Modern Greek is widely assumed/considered to be SVO. Some scholars (e.g. James Watters, [2000: 131] believe that verb and object order in Greek is determined by discourse pragmatics rather than by syntax.

[2]

- a. *Greek*: The crowd ... was bewildered (RESULT) because (*hoti*) all the people heard them speaking in their own language (REASON). (Acts 2:6)
- b. *Amele*: They all heard them speaking in their own native languages (REASON), so (*nu*) they were all bewildered.

[3]

- a. *Greek*: They even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats (MEANS), so that (*hina*) Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by (PURPOSE).
- b. *Amele*: Peter will come by and his shadow might fall on some of them (PURPOSE), so (*nu*) they carried the sick out into the street and laid them on mats (MEANS).

Although in less detail, Mildred Larson (1984) cites similar clause-order dissimilarities between English and Upper Asaro (citing data from Deibler and Taylor, 1977) as well as some unnamed languages in Amazonia. Stephen Levinsohn (personal communication to Roberts) specifies Inga as one such Amazonian language.

Several years ago I noticed that Bribri (Chibchan, Costa Rica) — also an SOV language — works the same way as Amele. For example the cause (reason) must appear first and the effect (result) afterwards. Roberts has found sufficient support among his colleagues working in OV languages in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere to suggest that this might be a linguistic universal. A relatively unsophisticated translator, who was translating verse by verse, could slavishly follow the structure of the often more prestigious source language, and wind up with a very unnatural sounding translation that would require considerably more processing effort to comprehend.

Further on in his article, Roberts shows that this typological distinction is related to many other differences between Greek and Amele, including the way in which speakers construct an argument. For instance, in Greek the approach is deductive: The thesis is given first and then the supporting arguments. In Amele, the order is inductive: The supporting arguments are given first, followed by the thesis. When checking the translation, the Amele readers would come to a thesis and then backtrack through the text in search of the supporting arguments. But they were

nowhere to be found because the translators had followed the structure of the source text, thereby placing the arguments after the thesis and rendering the argument impenetrable. Substantial restructuring was required to enable them to grasp the argumentation of the text. This would be particularly troublesome in the case of the epistles, where there is considerable argumentation. Because Korean is an SOV language, special attention should be paid to see if Korean argumentation structure is similar to that of Amele.

3.2. Grammatical Typology.

One of the interesting grammatical differences between languages is the way they organize their grammatical relations or whether they even have grammatical relations. Two of the more common types are *accusative* languages and *ergative* languages. Accusative languages treat transitive and intransitive subjects the same, for example by putting them in the nominative case. Direct objects, on the other hand, typically go in the accusative case. Ergative languages, however, treat the intransitive subject and the direct object the same, putting them both in the absolutive case, while transitive subjects go alone in the ergative case.¹⁶⁾

Languages can be accusative or ergative in different ways. For example, a language is morphologically ergative if it marks the core arguments with ergative and absolutive cases. It can be ergative with respect to word order if intransitive subjects and direct objects appear on one side of the verb, while transitive subjects appear on the other. We have syntactic ergativity if the intransitive subjects or direct objects function as the syntactic pivot, while transitive subjects do not. Syntactic pivots are the nouns that interact with syntactic rules, such as deletion in coordination.

In syntactically accusative languages like English, the subject of the second of two coordinate clauses is normally deleted if it refers to the same person or thing as the subject of the first clause. The only requirements are that both nouns be subjects

16) I am somewhat inappropriately describing ergative languages in terms of accusative languages for the sake of brevity and simplicity. However, in ergative languages the properties of subjects are divided between the ergative and absolutive cases, so it is questionable whether *subject* is even a useful concept when referring to ergative languages. This has moved a number of functional typologists and others to prefer Dixon's more neutral term *syntactic pivot*, the grammatically most central noun of a clause (see Dixon [1994], Palmer [1994] and Van Valin and LaPolla [1997]).

(either transitive or intransitive) and that they both have the same referent.

- [3] a. The man hit the dog. The man ran off.
 b. The man hit the dog and [the man] ran off.

Sentence [2b] would be misunderstood in many syntactically ergative languages because they apply deletion in coordination only between two *intransitive* subjects, two direct objects or one of each. Example [3b] is normal, however, and herein lies the problem for translators:

- [4] a. The man hit the dog. The dog ran off.
 b. The man hit the dog and [the dog] ran off

Although [3b] and [4b] are phonetically identical, they clearly have different meanings (Palmer, 1994; Payne, 1997; Van Valin and LaPolla, 1997). Recently, while I was taking part in a workshop for Iñupiak speakers, an Iñupiak woman brought up a conflict she had noticed between her Iñupiak and English New Testaments. The conflict was due to an Eskimo translator having read an English sentence similar to [2b] and having interpreted it as [3b]. Another student in the class, who is absolutely fluent in English, repeatedly read the English version and persistently misinterpreted it as though it had been written in Iñupiak.¹⁷⁾

This translation error, which could conceivably occur whenever there are coordinate clauses with deletion of the second clause's subject, sneaked past the original Iñupiak team because of their unawareness of the typological implication of the contrast between syntactic ergativity and syntactic accusativity, and underscores again the need for translators and consultants to be cognizant of the typological distinctions between the source and receptor languages. It is not impossible to translate [2b] into Iñupiak; it requires using the antipassive voice to alter the grammatical status of the participants. But the danger is that the translators will misunderstand the source language sentence and not realize the need to adjust the grammatical relations in the receptor language in order to preserve the meaning.

There may be important typological distinctions between neighbouring dialects as

17) Tom Payne (personal communication) related to me that a Yup'ik Eskimo assured him that the only possible interpretation of the Yup'ik sentence *Tom ate the bug and got sick* was *Tom ate the bug and the bug got sick*.

well as between dialects. The translators of one dialect ‘dialect A’ of Chuj, a Mayan language spoken in Guatemala, were using a Spanish translation as their base text, but were also relying heavily on an already existing Old Testament translation in neighbouring dialect B. Dialect B had only two numbers, *singular* and *plural*, whereas dialect A had three numbers, *singular*, *dual* and *plural*. The plural of dialect B was derived from a previously existing dual, and looked just like the dual of dialect A. The translators were unaware of this fact. They believed the duals of dialect B were plurals and translated accordingly. So wherever the existing translation in dialect B had a plural, in dialect A they put a dual. This typological mismatch was not discovered until the project was nearly finished. The resulting error, which occurred thousands of times in the text, was not amenable to a computer fix. So it had to be corrected manually, thereby delaying the project several months.

Garifuna has a morphologically very complex system of possessive marking in which possession is marked on the *possessum* rather than on the *possessor*.¹⁸⁾ Nouns referring to some things, for example trees and animals, cannot take possessive marking. This does not mean that their referents can never be possessed, but rather that Garifuna grammar does not allow such words to take possessive morphology. To get around this problem, for instance in the case of animals, they must use some form of the word *ilügüni* (roughly ‘pet’), which *can* take possessive morphology. One does not say *my dog* in Garifuna, but rather *my pet dog*. Recently, while working on the book of John, we came to the passage where Jesus says to Peter: *Feed my sheep*. But, of course, the Garifuna word for *sheep* cannot take possessive marking. Inserting a possessed form of the word *ilügüni* before *sheep* caused raucous laughter amongst the translators, since to do so precludes any possibility of understanding *sheep* metaphorically.

Many languages, probably most, have a voice alternation between active and passive voices. Usually the active voice is considered to be the unmarked or normal form. In the active voice the subject of the sentence is also the Agent of the action, while the object of the sentence is the Patient. The subject is also usually the topic of the sentence, or what is being talked about.

[5] The policeman arrested the thief

18) Garifuna is a head-marking language.

Agent

Patient

In the passive voice, the Patient is promoted to the position of subject of the sentence. The Agent is either demoted to the position of oblique or peripheral participant (usually in the form of a prepositional phrase introduced by the preposition *by*) or is deleted altogether. This implies that the active version of a sentence must normally be a transitive sentence (one with both a subject and an object). In most languages, the passive voice is marked because it is less normal to have the Patient functioning as the subject of the sentence. The passive voice is used, for example, when we want to talk *about* the Patient and *not* about the Agent

- [6] The thief was arrested by the policeman
 Patient Agent

In examples [5] and [6] both the Agent and the Patient are persons. But this need not be the case. The Patient can be a thing.

- [7] a. John ate the apple.
 b. The apple was eaten by John.

However, in Korean, when people want to use the passive voice, the passive subject (i.e., Patient) should be animate (a person or animal).¹⁹⁾ So in Korean it is grammatical to say [8]:

- [8] John-vn kv sakwa-lvl m4g-4ssta
 John-top the apple-acc eat-past
 ‘John ate the apple’

But it would be ungrammatical to say [9] in the passive voice because apples are not animate:

- [9] *Kv-sakwa-nvn John-ege m4g-hv-4ssta
 the apple-top John-dat eat-pass-past
 ‘The apple was eaten by John’

19) The affirmation and examples are from Song (1987: 74-6) cited by Palmer (1994: 30).

In Greek the passive voice is used very frequently and the passive subject need not be animate. So when translating from Greek into Korean, whenever the passive subject is not animate, another construction would need to be found that makes it possible for the Patient to be the topic of the sentence. In Korean perhaps this can be done by simply using a suffix that marks the inanimate Patient as the sentence topic.

Another interesting translational problem stemming from the passive voice has to do with the fact that in a number of Asian languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Cambodian and Lao the Patient subject is portrayed as the victim of an unfortunate event. So one might expect to hear a sentence such as *Peter was hit by a car* but not *Peter was saved by the doctor*. However, Greek does not use the passive voice specifically to indicate that the Patient subject has undergone some inauspicious event. Luke 3.21 is a good example.

[10] When all the people were being baptized,¹ Jesus was being baptized² too.
And as he was praying, heaven was opened³ (NIV).

In this verse there are no fewer than three passive constructions, all of which introduce new topics and none of which implies that the passive subject (*the people, Jesus* and *heaven*) have suffered some catastrophic event. To translate this passage into one of the Asian languages mentioned above with passive constructions would either be wrong or would imply that baptism is a dreadful experience. To avoid this, the translator would need to find some other marked syntactic construction that allows Patient participants to appear as topics.

Often different grammars simply transmit different information, information that cannot be conveniently approximated — much less duplicated — by the grammar of another language. Casad and Langacker discuss the case of two affixes which are widely used in Cora (Uto-Aztecan, Mexico).²⁰ The use of these affixes is far too complex to describe here, but the choice of one or the other depends on the position of an object with respect to the line of vision of the speaker. In reading the description of how these affixes are used, it becomes clear that they reflect a particular conceptualization of space that is determined largely by the fact that the

20) E. Casad and Ronald Langacker, “‘Inside’ and ‘outside’ in Cora Grammar”, *International Journal of American Linguistics* 51 (1985), 247-281 quoted by Hudson 1996: 83-84.

Cora people live out in the open, and yet are surrounded by mountains. Cases such as these force us to conclude with Richard A. Hudson (1996:84) that “even if we concentrate on grammatical constructions, affixes and the like, we still find dramatic differences from language to language in the kinds of meaning that can be expressed.”²¹⁾ And we might add that there are dramatic differences as well in the kinds of meaning that *must* be expressed.

<Keyword>

typology, universals, translation, grammar, relativity

21) Richard A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

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<Abstract>

성서 번역에 대한 언어학의 공헌: 어제와 오늘- 1부

로널드 로스 박사

(세계성서공회연합회 아메리카 지역 번역 컨설턴트)

성서 번역에서 언어학이 행해 오던 전통적인 역할이 변하고 있는데, 거기에는 두 가지 이유가 있다. 첫 번째 이유는 선교사들이 점점 더 번역을 적게 번역하고 모국어 번역자들이 점점 더 많이 번역을 하고 있기 때문이다. 그래서 대부분의 경우 선교사들은 그들이 번역 작업을 시작하기 전에 더 이상 대상 언어를 “마스터” 할 필요가 없는데, 이것은 그들이 음운론적, 형태론적, 그리고 구문론적 분석을 하느라 수 년 동안을 보낼 필요가 더 이상 없게 되었다는 의미이다. 두 번째 이유는 언어학 분야 자체가 엄청나게 확장되었기 때문이다. 이러한 변화들 중의 하나는 20세기 후반부를 풍미(風靡)했던 보편론에 대한 반대 개념으로서의 언어학적 상대성 이론의 재부상이다. 다시 한번 언어들을 그것들이 봉사하고 있는 문화들에 대한 반영으로 볼 수 있게 되었고, 언어들을 유형론적으로 비교할 수 있는 가능성은 그것들이 어떻게 상이할 수 있고 또한 어떻게 상이하지 않을 수 있는지에 대하여 우리로 하여금 아주 더 분명한 개념을 가질 수 있게 해준다. 번역자들은 원천 언어와 대상 언어 간의 유형론적인 유사성과 상이점을 알고 있어야 할 필요가 있다. 이 글에서는 특별히 구성 요소의 어순 유형론과 문법적 유형론을 살펴보고, 이것들에서 도출될 수 있는 함축적인 보편성 몇 가지를 조사하고, 이러한 것들이 번역자들에게 어떻게 유용할 수 있을지를 살펴보았다.

(장동수 역)