A Drift on a Sea of Implicature: Relevance Theory and the Pragmatics of Translation[*]

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1. Introduction: Problems raised by the application of Relevance Theory

1.1. Relevance Theory: A Brief Sketch of Some Important Terms

The application of Relevance Theory (RT) to the translation of the Bible has proved surprisingly controversial. I have elsewhere tried to moderate the debate and trace the "history of reception" within the United Bible Societies.[1] My intention here is not to engage in a theoretical discussion, but to reflect on issues arising from my practice as a translation consultant. I do this also because one criticism of RT, this time from academic sociolinguists rather than Bible translators, is that the proponents of RT have not demonstrated its usefulness with reference to the analysis of real language data, preferring instead to illustrate with concocted examples of conversation.[2] Space does not permit a detailed introduction to Relevance Theory, but it is important to understand some of the key concepts which will be used in this article.[3] As with many

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1) S. W. Pattemore, *Souls under the Altar: Relevance Theory and the Discourse Structure of Revelation*, UBS Monograph Series 9 (New York: UBS, 2003), 29-38; S. W. Pattemore, "Framing Nida: The Relevance of Translation Theory in the United Bible Societies", P. Noss, ed., *History of Bible Translation* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2007).

2) See the response to this by D. Sperber and D. Wilson, "Remarks on Relevance Theory and the Social Sciences", *Multilingua* 16 (1997), 145-151.

3) A full presentation of RT can be found in D. Sperber and D. Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). Easier introductions can be found in E. A.

theories, RT uses some special terms of its own, and also uses some ordinary terms with special meaning.

Relevance Theory is a pragmatic, cognitive explanation of the way human communication works. It is based on a number of observations. Firstly, human communication is not simply code-like. Although it does use a system of coding, the results of the coding-decoding process are subjected to interpretation based on the extensive use of inference. Thus, the text of a message interacts with its context to prompt the audience towards the meaning communicated. This process of searching for meaning is driven by the desire to find the communication *relevant*. Simply put, RT suggests that we are programmed to understand messages by interpreting them in contexts that provide the best or most likely set of useful ideas. These contexts are sets of ideas that we already hold to be true or probably true, The sum of such ideas is our **cognitive environment** and two participants in a dialogue assume each other shares a **mutual cognitive environment**. An idea or a communication is more **relevant** if it has lots of useful implications (called **cognitive effects** or **contextual effects**) for the listener, which may provide new information, strengthen or modify information the listener already has, or negate such existing information. The communication is also more relevant if it requires less mental effort to process (**processing effort**). A text, or communication is said to be **optimally relevant** when it is worth the listener's effort to process it, and it is the most relevant text that could have been generated consistent with the speakers abilities and preferences. When we receive an intentional message, we assume that there are good ideas that we can access for an acceptable amount of thinking.

These ideas may appear common-sense or trivial on the surface, but carefully applied they can provide considerable help in our study of the way human communication works, whether mediated by ancient biblical texts, or new translated texts.

One of the key outcomes of this theory for the way we understand texts is that the old distinction between *implicit* and *explicit* information is considerably refined. Usually *explicit* information is considered to be all that is actually stated

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Gutt, *Relevance Theory: A Guide to Successful Communication in Translation* (Dallas: SIL, 1992); and G. Green, "Relevance Theory and Biblical Studies", Paper read at SBL International Meeting, at Groningen, The Netherlands, 2004.

by the text of a communication, while anything which has to be either assumed or deduced from this is *implicit*. RT instead uses the idea of *implicatures* and *explicatures*. **Explicatures** are derived from the actual form of the text, but they include ideas which result from assigning appropriate reference to pronouns, general terms and deictic particles, resolving the ambiguity of ambiguous terms, and enriching the ideas in the text from the listeners' previously stored memory. Thus they include many ideas which used be described as *implicit information*, but under certain strict conditions: they must be able to be derived by logical processing from the text itself.

Implicatures, by contrast, can only be derived by processing the text *in a particular context*. They result from the interaction of text and context, not from either individually. Some implicatures may be strong, and are almost certainly part of what the speaker wants to communicate. But many implicatures are weak and there is no firm boundary between the strong implicatures and those weak ones which do not form part of the communicator's intentions.

With these ideas in mind we can proceed to describe the problems which this paper will attempt to address.

1.2. Two Recurring Problems in Translation Checking

Bible translation (especially into non-Indo-European languages) is a crucible for exegesis. Every translator is familiar with the experience of going to a learned commentary for help on a specific problem of exegesis, which will significantly determine how a verse is translated, only to come away disappointed, feeling that the commentator has been asking all the wrong questions and ignoring some key determiner of meaning. But sometimes even the translations we use as resources, and the textbooks and handbooks we rely on to undergird our decision-making, are not asking the right questions. Or they are, perhaps, assuming things that those of us who work in minority-language contexts cannot take for granted. Because Bible translation is also a point of intersection of what could be rather abstract textual analysis with real acts of communication in the target language. Relevance is arguably an important criterion in exegesis, but perhaps even more obviously in the crafting of a new text to communicate with a new audience. For some time now I have been

making brief notes on verses or passages where I think that a relevance-sensitive hermeneutic would aid translators, or where RT would critique existing translation practice or model translations. I have selected issues from translation checking sessions over the past year or so, supplemented by a few examples from my work on Revelation. Where it is helpful or illustrative I will quote a back-translation of the target language text which alerted me to the problem, but all of these verses have come to my attention through problems in minority language translations. These translation issues cluster around two main focal points.

The first of these is brought into sharpest relief by considering the question of whether "implicit information" in the source text should be made explicit in the translated text, though the problem is much wider than that. It is essentially to do with *implicatures* and since traditional translation theory and practice has no principled way of dealing with implicatures, translational adjustments sometimes proposed or modeled set the translated text adrift to be carried in unpredictable ways by the currents of interaction between text and context.

The second focus has to do with what is sometimes called "contextual consistency" as opposed to "lexical consistency" in translation. In these examples, translational adjustments can drastically change the nature of one of the most accessible dimensions of context – the text itself – distorting or obscuring patterns in the tapestry, with a consequent loss or distortion of meaning.

2. A-Drift On a Sea of Implicature

Consider first

2 Corinthians 3:15-16
15 ἀλλ' ἕως σήμερον ἡνίκα ἂν ἀναγινώσκηται Μωϋσῆς, κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτῶν κεῖται· 16 ἡνίκα δὲ ἐὰν ἐπιστρέψῃ πρὸς κύριον, περιαιρεῖται τὸ κάλυμμα.
NRSV 2 Corinthians 3:15-16
15 Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over

their minds; 16 but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.
　GNT 2 Corinthians 3:15-16
　15 Even today, whenever they read the Law of Moses, the veil still covers their minds. 16 But it can be removed, as the scripture says about Moses: "His veil was removed when he turned to the Lord."

　Cf. Exodus 34:34, LXX
　34 ἡνίκα δ' ἂν εἰσεπορεύετο Μωυσῆς ἔναντι κυρίου λαλεῖν αὐτῷ περιηρεῖτο τὸ κάλυμμα ἕως τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι καὶ ἐξελθὼν ἐλάλει πᾶσιν τοῖς υἱοῖς Ισραηλ ὅσα ἐνετείλατο αὐτῷ κύριος

　There is no doubt that Exodus 34 is an open and active context, a strong component of the mutual cognitive environment of Paul and his readers. But does Paul intend verse 16 to be heard as a direct quote, as GNT makes very explicit by inserting the quotation formula "as the scripture says about Moses"? The move by GNT is problematic on several levels. It adds assertions like "these are the precise words of scripture", assertions which themselves have a wide array of weak implicature attached. Taken in a canonical context, not the least of the problems is that neither Septuagint nor Hebrew says precisely what GNT puts in quotes (both have *Moses* taking the veil off his own face when he *goes in before* the Lord). Nor does the exact quote suit Paul's purpose, which is to say something about the Corinthians or Christians in general, not something about Moses. I do not want to exaggerate the problems of the GNT here, because clearly the translators have taken some trouble to compensate for the extra or unintended implicatures involved in their adjustment − a footnote gives an alternative more literal rendering, and the quote is introduced by a clause which makes the statement about Moses illustrative of the experience of Christians. But I suggest that with these techniques the processing effort has increased dramatically all in order to cope with stray implicatures which would not have been generated by leaving the verse allusive rather than quotative.

　Consider another example,

　1 Corinthians 10:18
　18 βλέπετε τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα· οὐχ οἱ ἐσθίοντες τὰς θυσίας κοινωνοὶ

τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου εἰσίν;

NRSV 1 Corinthians 10:18

18 Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?

GNT 1 Corinthians 10:18

18 Consider the people of Israel; those who eat what is offered in sacrifice share in the altar's service to God.

What does it mean to be "partners of the altar"? This is a rather unusual phrase (at least to us) and capable of a wide range of meaning, corresponding to different contexts accessed to derive the implicature which is taken to be "the meaning". Against a background of understanding of the Jewish communal sacrificial system, the meaning was probably clear to the Corinthians. The Translator's Handbook comments, highlighting the importance of the mutual cognitive environment:[4]

> As in verse 16, Paul is appealing to well-known facts and common beliefs. The sentence is concise and may need to be expanded in translation. For example, "those who eat the sacrifices share with one another in the sacrifice to God made on the altar." When an animal was sacrificed by the Hebrews to God, part of it was burned on the altar, and part of it was eaten by the people who were performing this act of worship. The underlying thought, then, is that by sharing in the sacrificial meal, Jewish worshipers enter into a relationship with God that also unites them with one another. Paul's readers would know, of course, that although some sacrifices had to be burnt whole, there were others that priests, Levites, and even ordinary people could share by eating part of the flesh (see Lev 10:12-15; Deut 18:1-4).

If this social context of reference to sacrifice on an altar is readily accessible to Paul's audience, it may well be necessary to help readers in non-sacrificially oriented societies. The GNT chooses to make some of this explicit but in a way that is itself ambiguous and problematic, having its own quite different set of possible implicatures. One translation I checked offered as a back-translation of

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4) P. Ellingworth and H. Hatton, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* (London; New York: UBS, 1985), 200.

their final version "are the ones who make the sacrifice at the altar." Now this is a reasonable implicature of GNT's version, but not of the original, and ends up with the people and priests very much confused.

When an implicature is raised to the level of an explicature, or either implicature or explicature raised to an explicit assertion, their status in the interpretation changes. They are now presented as something for which the author takes direct responsibility and intends directly to communicate. That in itself may be problematic. Background information which would be shared by the original author and his audience, or by the speaker and his audience within the world of the text, is not normally explicated. It is part of the mutual cognitive environment and to explicate it (on either level) usually decreases the relevance of the communication by increasing the processing effort for no extra cognitive effects. On relatively rare occasions, when such background information is explicated, it is in order to draw attention to it as the starting point of a discussion (e.g. in Paul's "We know⋯." Statements). When we consider the situation of the secondary audience (of a translated document), the situation may be slightly different and some background information does dramatically increase the cognitive effects of the text for little extra processing effort (e.g. the *river* Jordan, the *region* of Judea etc.). The question that has to be decided is − at what cost does this come, in terms of the integrity of the text itself? Are we producing a totally new text which communicates (the same message) to a new audience, or are we giving a new audience access to an existing text? There will necessarily be some trade-off in terms of explicating background information. Usually information in the nature of *explicatures* will not greatly distort the communication when it is made explicit.

But there is a further problem that occurs when implicatures (sometimes weak or disputed implicatures, but even relatively strong ones) are raised to the level of explicatures. They entail their own set of implicatures which are now grounded on the newly created explicature (or even assertion). It is possible that these second level implicatures would have been communicated in the original communication situation, but at best much more weakly. Given that there is also a change of context of communication this new set communicated by the translated text might not represent anything communicated in the original context at all. And even if they had been present for the original audience, they

are now much stronger because they are based not on implicatures but on something which is explicitly vouched for in the text. The down-stream effect of this is most readily seen in minority-language translations which are themselves based on major language translations, like the Good News Translation.

Consider a few more cases

1 Corinthians 10:5
5 ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τοῖς πλείοσιν αὐτῶν εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεός, κατεστρώθησαν γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ.
NRSV 1 Corinthians 10:5
5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.
GNT 1 Corinthians 10:5
5 But even then God was not pleased with most of them, and so their dead bodies were scattered over the desert.

This follows the LXX of Number 14:16, which seems to have read חטש (scattered) for MT's טחש (slaughtered), and while GNT has on this occasion followed a more literal rendering of the Greek verb, the total phrase raises many more questions (who killed them? Who scattered them? Were they killed in one place and then scattered like salt?) and wide array of possible and distracting scenarios. NRSV's restrained rendering does not create such a plethora of implicatures.

1 Corinthians 10:7
7 μηδὲ εἰδωλολάτραι γίνεσθε καθώς τινες αὐτῶν, ὥσπερ γέγραπται, Ἐκάθισεν ὁ λαὸς φαγεῖν καὶ πεῖν καὶ ἀνέστησαν παίζειν.
NRSV 1 Corinthians 10:7
7 Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play."
GNT 1 Corinthians 10:7
7 nor to worship idols, as some of them did. As the scripture says, "The people sat down to a feast which turned into an orgy of drinking and sex."*

The Translator's Handbook judiciously observes "TEV's translation of the quotation from Exodus 32:6b is a vivid paraphrase, the meaning of which may be implied in the Greek but is not expressed."[5] Not only has GNT explicated the sexual component, but it has regrouped the drinking with the play/sex/dance rather than with the eating, where it belongs. Once again, this is a clever and well expressed explication of some implicatures of the original text, but it itself carries so many further implicatures (particularly to do with drunken sexual behaviour) that are at best only weakly derivable from the text.

On an entirely different note are the implicatures of GNT's

> Romans 11:16
> 16 εἰ δὲ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἁγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα· καὶ εἰ ἡ ῥίζα ἁγία, καὶ οἱ κλάδοι.
> NRSV Romans 11:16
> 16 If the part of the dough offered as first fruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy;
> GNT Romans 11:16
> 16 If the first piece of bread is given to God, then the whole loaf is his also.

GNT raises quite humorous implicatures for the modern reader, in a day of sliced bread, Does God get the crust? Is this a good thing or not?

Notice that the problem is not with the practice of making implicit information explicit *per se* − NRSV also does this. It is really a case of monitoring the possible range of implicatures which are let loose by changing the status of the implicit material.

And in 1 Corinthians 14:17 both NRSV and, much more so, GNT sound like Paul is damning with faint praise, where no slight is intended on the quality of their thanksgiving.

> 1 Corinthians 14:17
> 17 σὺ μὲν γὰρ καλῶς εὐχαριστεῖς ἀλλ᾽ ὁ ἕτερος οὐκ οἰκοδομεῖται.
> NRSV 1 Corinthians 14:17

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5) Ellingworth and Hatton, *Translator's Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, 193.

17 For you may give thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up.
GNT 1 Corinthians 14:17
17 Even if your prayer of thanks to God is quite good, other people are not helped at all.

Very similar to these cases of unintended or uncontrolled implicatures is the problem which arises when a so-called "meaning-based translation" moves in the opposite direction, making a statement which has *fewer* implicatures than the original statement (e.g. promise for oath).

Hebrews 3:11
11 ὡς ὤμοσα ἐν τῇ ὀργῇ μου·
NRSV Hebrews 3:11
11 As in my anger I swore,
GNT Hebrews 3:11
11 I was angry and made a solemn promise:

The contracting set of implicatures involved in GNT's rendering became evident when I was presented with a back-translation reading just "I was angry and promised⋯", now a long way distant from oath-taking.

Romans 12:1
1 ⋯ τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν·
NRSV Romans 12:1
1 ⋯ which is your spiritual worship.
GNT Romans 12:1
1 ⋯ dedicated to his service

This came back in back-translation from a third language as "faithful in doing his work". Once again, this is quite a reasonable step based on quite strong implicatures derived from the GNT rendering, but now communicating ideas of which are scarcely if at all present in Paul's text.

The problems discussed here are a subset of the more general problem, a kind of cross-linguistic "semantic drift", whereby a translated expression moves in one direction from the source text and a secondary translation moves even

further. One of the key points raised by a RT approach is that this is not simply a problem of semantics. It is far more extensive, given the high proportion of the communication content carried by implicatures. In fact it can take place when terms of very similar semantic content are used − a drift of implicature is created by the changing context.

3. Unraveling the Tapestry of Context

It is a common-place of translation theory and practice that many words in a source language do not permit a single word to be used in their translation into a given target language. Even word pairs which are a good fit in one context do not correspond to each other in a different context. Such word pairs are said to have different semantic ranges. A word with a broad semantic range in the source language may need to be translated by several different words in the target language. (Let us leave aside for the moment consideration of the fact that the semantics sometimes obscure what is in itself really a pragmatic issue - a consequence of the context-dependent search for optimal relevance.)

Nida and Taber express this idea as the first in their "System of Priorities": "The Priority of Contextual consistency over Verbal Consistency."[6]

> "it is inevitable that the choice of the right word in the receptor language to translate a word in the source-language text depends more on the context than upon a fixed system of verbal consistency, i.e. always translating one word in the source language by a corresponding word in the receptor language."

At first glance this appears entirely consistent with an RT perspective on the importance of context, but in fact it contains a hidden danger based on the nature of and understanding of the term "context". A problem arises, to which insufficient attention is often given by translators, because an important component of the mutual cognitive environment of a particular word, phrase, or

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6) E. A. Nida and C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 15-22. The quotation is from p.17.

sentence is the text itself, and the other texts to which it explicitly or implicitly refers or alludes. On the assumption that authors are self-conscious and deliberative in their composition of texts, it is reasonable to suppose that choice of a particular word or phrase is made in full awareness (and an assumption of mutual awareness) of its previous use in accessible contexts. These other accessible contexts (be they earlier parts of the same text, or other texts to which connection has been or can be established) are therefore part of the context of interpretation of the new use of the word or phrase, *even when a semanticist might decide that they are being used in a different sense!* When a translator chooses to translate with a different word in the new context, this web of contextual implication is broken and the interpretation of the translated text cannot help but be different from that of the original.

I have elsewhere highlighted the importance of verbal consistency in translation for the book of Revelation[7], but a few examples here will help clarify what I mean.

> Revelation 6:9
> 9 εἶδον ὑποκάτω τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου τὰς ψυχὰς τῶν ἐσφαγμένων διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον.

The statement that the souls are of those who have been *slaughtered* (ἐσφαγμένων) immediately evokes two recent contexts – that of the second seal (6:4), and that of the slaughtered Lamb (5:6, 9, 12). Although the former is the more recent one, I suggest that it is less strongly evoked and that the predominant association is with the slaughtered Lamb. The opening of the second seal sees a rider on a red horse permitted to take peace from the earth καὶ ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάξουσιν (and that they might slaughter one another). Not only is the verb here future active indicative, as opposed to the perfect passive participle in 6:9, but its object is the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλους. Access to this context then raises the unanswerable question of whether the slaughtered souls, or even Christians in general, have themselves taken part in the slaughter of others. To attempt to answer this requires unnecessary processing effort and

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7) S. W. Pattemore, "Repetition in Revelation: Implications for Translation", *TBT* 53:4 (2002), 425 -441.

returns few results. On the other hand, the slaughtered Lamb stands over the whole of the seal-openings as the primary subject, and the perfect passive participle of σφάζω has twice been used of him (5:6, 12, and an aorist passive at 5:9). I conclude from this that, while the association of the death of the martyrs with the period of mutual slaughter may be weakly implied, the association of these people with the Lamb is much more strongly so. These are people whose story is, at least with regard to their death, like the story of the Lamb.

NRSV translates σφάξουσιν as "slaughtered", a suitably strong and marked word, and the same as has been used of the Lamb in chapter 5, allowing this connection to be made. GNT and CEV use a rather colourless, or semantically drained "killed", which allows but scarcely encourages the connection. But NLT in this case explicates the fate of the souls under the altar as "those who had been martyred." Now in terms of contextual consistency, this is a good move, but it completely breaks the connection with the story of the Lamb (who was described as having been "killed").

> Revelation 7:2-3
> 2 καὶ εἶδον ἄλλον ἄγγελον … ἔχοντα <u>σφραγῖδα</u> θεοῦ ζῶντος, καὶ ἔκραξεν φωνῇ μεγάλῃ ⋯ 3 λέγων, Μὴ ἀδικήσητε τὴν γῆν μήτε τὴν θάλασσαν μήτε τὰ δένδρα, ἄχρι <u>σφραγίσωμεν</u> τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν.

The most immediate cognitive environment to which the mention of a seal and of sealing leads, before any cultural or inter-textual contexts are considered, is the inner-textual environment of Revelation 5:1-8:1, in which the scroll with seven seals is the overarching symbol.[8] There can be little doubt that the choice of identical terminology is not accidental and that there is a deliberate irony here, an irony which works in favour of the people of God. The seals that close the scroll which is first seen in the hand of the one seated on the throne (5:1) presumably bear the imprint of God's own seal. The *opening* of the seven seals, which is almost complete, is revealing the wrath of God against disobedient humanity. But here there is a simultaneous sealing to take place. And just

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8) σφάζω occurs, apart from ch.7; at 5:1, 2, 5, 9; 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12; 8:1; 9:4.

as the inexorable revelation of the judgment of God has been marked by a repetitive formula (Καὶ ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγῖδα…), so now the sealing of God's servants is emphasised by repetition (7:2, 3, 4, 5, 8). Against the background of the unsealing of the scroll, with its attendant disasters, the people of God are secured by a process of sealing.

Most versions retain this possibility with a reference to "sealing", although GNT does dilute the effect a little by saying "marked with God's seal". It is CEV that loses the plot here, by referring throughout this scene to "marking" rather than "sealing". This could be seen as a good example of contextual consistency, but in fact it looses the connection completely, and in the process sets up a closer connection than is warranted to another mark not yet mentioned at this point─ the mark of the beast.

The importance of translational consistency for Revelation's verbal tapestry may be an extreme example, but it is far from unique to this genre. Let us first look at some examples where the textual connection to be made is close by.

> Hebrew 2:11b-12a
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> 11 ··· δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οὐκ ἐπαισχύνεται ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοὺς καλεῖν 12 λέγων, Ἀπαγγελῶ τὸ ὄνομά σου τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου,
>
> NRSV Hebrew 2:11b-12a
>
> 11 ··· For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them **brothers and sisters**,[1] 12 saying, "I will proclaim your name to my **brothers and sisters**,[m]
>
> GNT Hebrew 2:11b-12a
>
> 11 ··· That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them his **family**. 12 He says to God:*"I will tell my **people** what you have done;

These two verses have the closest of connections. The quote in v.12 is in support of the assertion of v.11, but GNT obscures this logical link by translating "adelphos" differently in each verse. NRSV is rather awkward with its "brothers and sisters" in each case, but at least it preserves the link. Why could GNT not have used "family" both times? "My people" is significantly wider in its meaning and the quote no longer directly supports the assertion of v.11.

> Acts 9:14-16
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> 14 καὶ ὧδε ἔχει ἐξουσίαν παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων δῆσαι πάντας τοὺς

ἐπικαλουμένους τὸ ὄνομά σου. 15 εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ κύριος, Πορεύου, ὅτι σκεῦος ἐκλογῆς ἐστίν μοι οὗτος τοῦ βαστάσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐνώπιον ἐθνῶν τε καὶ βασιλέων υἱῶν τε Ἰσραήλ· 16 ἐγὼ γὰρ ὑποδείξω αὐτῷ ὅσα δεῖ αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματός μου παθεῖν.

NRSV	GNT
14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your **name**.” 15 But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my **name** before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; 16 I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my **name**.”	14 And he has come to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who worship **you**.” 15 The Lord said to him, “Go, because I have chosen him to serve me, to make my **name** known to Gentiles and kings and to the people of Israel. 16 And I myself will show him all that he must suffer for my **sake**.”

Ananias expresses his reluctance to visit Saul by raising inferences about the potential damage to the Lord's reputation he presents. But the Lord takes up precisely this challenge and turns it back − “I am quite capable of looking after my own interests, thank you Ananias. In fact this man will further those interests and himself suffer for those interests in precisely the same way he has been making others suffer.” These implicatures are made possible by the network of context created by the repetition of the work “name”, a network completely lost in GNT. I am not arguing that a literal “name” is the only possible translation. But the irony and interaction can only be preserved by taking note of this tapestry and replicating it somehow.

1 Corinthians 9:8-10
9 ἐν γὰρ τῷ Μωϋσέως νόμῳ γέγραπται, Οὐ κημώσεις βοῦν ἀλοῶντα. μὴ τῶν βοῶν μέλει τῷ θεῷ 10 ἢ δι᾽ ἡμᾶς πάντως λέγει; δι᾽ ἡμᾶς γὰρ ἐγράφη ὅτι ὀφείλει ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι ὁ ἀροτριῶν ἀροτριᾶν καὶ ὁ ἀλοῶν ἐπ᾽ ἐλπίδι τοῦ μετέχειν.

NRSV	GNT
9 For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is **treading out the grain**.” Is it	9 We read in the Law of Moses, “Do not muzzle an ox when you are using it to **thresh corn**.” Now, is God

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<tr><td>for oxen that God is concerned? 10 Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and **whoever threshes** should thresh in hope of a share in the crop.</td><td>concerned about oxen?* 10 Didn't he really mean us when he said that? Of course that was written for us. The one who ploughs and the **one who reaps** should do their work in the hope of getting a share of the crop.</td></tr>
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Once again we have two verses with a very close connection to each other. In this case the OT quote comes first in v.9 and is then discussed in v.10. GNT is fine in v.9 taken by itself − better in fact than NRSV, which could lead to the idea that the ox is randomly trampling through a corn field (as it appeared to do in one B/T I saw − a case of semantic drift). It is clear in GNT that the oxen are being used for a purpose by a farmer. But then the connection to v.10 is lost in both GNT and NRSV. In the Greek, the precise word used of the ox is used of the person who threshes in hope! In fact this is the point of the analogy − God's concern is not for threshing oxen so much as for people who thresh in hope. This time CEV gets it right, translating with "grinding grain" in each verse.

James 1:9-10
9 Καυχάσθω δὲ ὁ ἀδελφὸς <u>ὁ ταπεινὸς</u> ἐν τῷ ὕψει αὐτοῦ, 10 ὁ δὲ πλούσιος ἐν τῇ <u>ταπεινώσει</u> αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ὡς ἄνθος χόρτου παρελεύσεται.

NRSV
9 Let the believer[c] who is **lowly** he boast in being raised up, 10 and the rich in being brought **low**, because the rich will disappear like a flower in the field.

GNT
9 Those Christians who are **poor** must be glad when God lifts them up, 10 and the rich Christians must be glad when God brings them **down**. For the rich will pass away like the flower of a wild plant.

Little needs to be said here, as it is obvious that GNT has lost the ironic connection between the verses. It takes a lot more effort than warranted to process "bring them down" to get "make poor".

Now let us consider cases where the web of textual context must be seen on a wider canvas. And just so I am not always putting down GNT, here is a case

where the web of allusion is well woven, at least in the immediate context. In 2 Corinthians 1:3-6 Paul uses παρακαλεω or παρακλησις nine times in four verses: a loud thematic drum beat. And GNT appears to do it well — at least in terms of local lexical consistency (leaving aside the issue that the set of implicatures of "help" is much broader and less marked):

> 2 Corinthians 1:3-6
> 3 Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful Father, the God from whom all **help** comes! 4 He **helps** us in all our troubles, so that we are able to **help** others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same **help** that we ourselves have received from God. 5 Just as we have a share in Christ's many sufferings, so also through Christ we share in God's great **help**. 6 If we suffer, it is for your **help** and salvation; if we are **helped**, then you too are **helped** and given the strength to endure with patience the same sufferings that we also endure.

So far so good but what about if we range a bit more widely?

> 2 Corinthians 7:4, 6
> 4 I am so sure of you; I take such pride in you! In all our troubles I am still full of **courage**; I am running over with joy.
> 6 But God, who **encourages** the downhearted, **encouraged** us with the coming of Titus.

Once again, pleasingly consistent in the local context. But apparently unrelated to the first chapter. Is this not the same book, talking to the same set of circumstances? And if "encourage" is a suitable translation in ch.7, why not in ch.1?

Let us look at some more examples that begin at a local level but have wider significance:

What about grace in Romans?

> Romans 15:15
> … διὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ

> NRSV   GNT

<div style="margin-left:2em">

15 … because of the **grace** given me by God

15 … because of the **privilege** God has given me

</div>

The Translator's Handbook notes:[9]

> **Because of the privilege God has given me** is literally "because of the grace which was given me by God" ("grace" is taken in the same sense here that it was in 1:5). **Because of the privilege God has given me** may also be rendered as "because God has given me the privilege of being a servant …" In some languages the closest equivalent of **privilege** may be "the wonderful work", "the very special task", or "has honored me by giving me the work of a servant."

And GNT has indeed translated χάρις in the same way as it did in 1:5. But consider now that in a much closer context we have the following:

Romans 12:3, 6
3 Λέγω γὰρ διὰ τῆς χάριτος τῆς δοθείσης μοι…
6 ἔχοντες δὲ χαρίσματα κατὰ τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν ἡμῖν διάφορα, εἴτε προφητείαν κατὰ τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως,

NRSV
3 For by the **grace** given to me I say …
6 So we are to use our different **gifts** in accordance with the **grace** that God has given us

GNT
3 And because of God's **gracious gift** to me I say …
6 We have **gifts** that differ according to the **grace** given to us:

Paul has continued, with only minor interruptions, to talk about the responsibilities of Christians towards one another, through to ch. 15. And earlier parts of ch. 15 have quite strongly focused the issue. So for Paul's audience this presents a much more easily accessed context than his opening remarks (e.g. 1:5), and one which is productive of a flood of good cognitive effects. Paul's ministry to the Gentiles is precisely of the same order as that which the Spirit

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9) B. M. Newman and E. A. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Romans* (London; New York: UBS, 1973), 279.

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inspires in the Roman Christians in various ways, and his exercise of that ministry is also consistent with what he urges on them in ch. 12. I suggest that it is therefore important that the link be made by similar choice of words in translation. There is, of course, another level of problem revealed here in 12:6 − the complete absence of obvious connection between the English words chosen to translate χάρις and χαρίσματα (GNT's move in 12:3 seems to be a good way of tying the two together). But that is another story!

Much more could be said on the translation in Romans of the δικαιος, δικαιοσύνη, δικαιόω series, complicated as it is in English by the existence of two different series of words with quite different connotations for ordinary readers: the Latinate justify, just, justification series with its legal context of meaning, and the Germanic right, righteous, righteousness series with many more personal and moral connotations. And it is further complicated by the ongoing debates over righteousness in Paul as scholars seek to penetrate the first-century cognitive environment within which Paul was writing.[10]   But whatever view one takes about Paul's relationship to and rhetorical stance with respect to second-Temple Judaism, it can scarcely be denied that the heavy usage of this word family forms a developing web of context in Romans against which each subsequent use of a δίκαι- word must be understood and which is obscured by being split in two in English. However, that should be the topic for another paper.

4. Conclusions

Relevance theoretic approaches to translation are sometimes portrayed as representing a retreat from Nida's functional equivalence theory, back towards literalism. It would not be surprising if this was suggested about my present paper, since the translation that comes in for most criticism is the Good News Translation. In response let me first say that I love the GNT and encourage all translators I work with to use it − both to help understand the text and as a model for what can be done in English. Of course, not all retreats are a bad

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10) For a good summary of the implications for translation of the new perspectives on Paul, see Omanson, 2004.

thing. Retreat from an untenable position in warfare is often a necessary precursor to a new advance. If certain positions taken as a consequence of Nida's theory become untenable in the face of new evidence, then retreat may be necessary. Nida's own continuing output of published material demonstrates a responsiveness to new challenges and evidence not always apparent in all who profess to follow him. But the application of Relevance Theory, so far from being a backwards step, advances our understanding of the pathways of human communication, and therefore of the ways in which translated texts can be expected to communicate. Rather than focusing attention on an attempt to match words or phrases between a source text and a growing translated text, RT forces our attention away from the text itself and onto the interaction of text and context, both original and new, and onto the sea of implicatures which washes over the rocks of contention. But aware now of the diverse currents contributing to the making of meaning, we are not left rudderless, because the principle of optimal relevance allows us some calculated steerage.

Gutt's application of RT to translation explicitly rejects the claims of so-called "literal translations" to be able to convey the meaning of the original.[11] Throughout this paper I take as firmly established that meaning is paramount in translation, that words have a semantic range which rarely corresponds to that of a word in another language and that context determines the meaning in a particular instance of the word.[12] It may appear that in some instances relevance considerations move us towards translation decisions similar to those of "unprincipled literalism." But even if this is the case it is for very different and highly defensible reasons. In this paper, I have suggested two types of situation where the results of a "functional equivalence" approach sometimes fail to achieve the stated aims − to communicate the same message to a new audience. First I have discussed the problem of unintended implicatures and the drift of meaning. And secondly I have examined cases where apparently context-sensitive translation decisions in fact set the text adrift from its context. In neither case do we retreat to a rule like "translate as literally as possible". In fact

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11) See E. A. Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context*. 2nd ed. (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2000), 130-131, 232.

12) See M. L. Strauss, "Form, Function, and the 'Literal Meaning' Fallacy in English Bible Translation", *TBT* 56:3 (2005), 153-168 for a robust demolition of the fallacy of "literal" translation.

we challenge the meaningfulness of such a rule. Instead we propose a more careful understanding of how the text operates with respect to its intended context.

<주요어>(Keywords)

Relevance Theory, contextual consistency, lexical consistency, Implicature, explicature, translation choice,

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관련성 이론과 번역의 실제적 선택
-함축적 의미의 바다를 표류하며-

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관련성 이론(Relevance Theory)은 초기 1990년대에 언스트-아우구스트 구트 (Ernst-August Gutt)에 의해 소개된 이래로 성서 번역계에서 논쟁거리가 되어 왔다. 하지만 그것은 강력하게 추론에 바탕을 둔 행위로 의사 소통을 이해하기 때문에 번역 과정의 설명과 분석에 있어 제공할 것이 많다. 이 논문은 관련성 이론의 몇몇 개념들, 특히 내포적 표현과 외연적 표현의 개념들의 개략적 설명으로 시작한다. 그리고 그것은 저자가 컨설턴트로서 비주류 언어 번역들을 검토하는 과정에서 관찰되어 온 두 가지 문제를 묘사하고, 관련성 이론이 우리로 하여금 어떤 공통적인 번역 행태에 대해 어떻게 의문을 갖게 하는지 보여준다.

이 문제들 중 첫 번째 것은 비주류 언어 번역물이 다른 (예를 들면 영어) 번역물, 특히 의미에 바탕을 둔 번역본으로부터 번역될 때 종종 발생한다. 기존의 번역에 의해 만들어지는 번역 선택들은 텍스트의 함축적 의미들을 좁히거나 넓힐 수 있고, 이 함축적 의미들을 종종 명백한 진술들로 바꿀 수 있다. 이것에 기초한 두 번째 번역물은 원문에서 더 멀어진다. 왜냐하면 원문에서는 단지 하나의 가능한 함축적 의미였던 것이 첫 번째 번역에서는 명백한 진술이 되고 종종 그것과 함께 하나의 완전히 새로운 함축적 정보 묶음을 가져오기 때문이다.

두 번째 문제는 나이다의 번역 원칙 중 하나, 즉 문맥상의 일관성이 어휘상의 일관성보다 더 중요하다는 것에서 발생한다. 이것은 의심할 여지없이 사실이지만, 그 적용은 종종 문맥이 부분적으로 거미줄처럼 얽혀 있는 텍스트 자체에 의해 만들어진다는 사실을 무시해 왔다. 그래서 그 동일한 용어의 이전 사용들이 약간 다른 의미를 가진다 해도 새로운 문맥에서는 그 용어의 의미에 기여한다. 텍스트 그 자체 내에 있는 이 연결 관계를 무시하는 것은 원문의 의미를 왜곡하는 것으로 이끌 수 있다.

이 두 문제는 저자가 번역 컨설팅에서 겪은 실제적 경험에서 나오는 예들에서 볼 수 있으며, 관련성 이론의 통찰력을 사용하여 분석되고 논의된다. 이것은 번역 선택의 적절성에 접근하는 훨씬 더 정확한 길을 제공한다.