The Translation Studies Turn

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Introduction

There are a few preliminary statements I want to make to set the stage for what will come in subsequent sections of this paper. As I move into the paper, it should become clear what Translation Studies refers to, but the word "turn" in the title may need a little explanation. In the literature it's common to see references to the linguistic turn, the cultural turn, the postmodern turn, the sociological turn, etc. In each case, one field of study is so impacted by another field or perspective that the direction of study seems to turn and follow a different path. For example, in Translation Studies, the cultural turn refers to the move from the dominance of linguistics to a more culturally-focused movement. Lynne Long, in the introduction to *Holy Untranslatable*, cites Bassnett and Lefevere (1990) who say that the cultural turn in translation studies

> expressed the realization that linguistic models were insufficient to account for translation processes and altered the way that the translation of literary texts was approached by giving the cultural context at least equal footing with the linguistic context. 4-5

The "Translation Studies Turn" is intended to communicate my sense—and that of other colleagues—that those of us involved in Bible translation are living through an era of significant change, a "turn" if you will, in translation. How we perceive Bible translation is being impacted by changes in the world around us. Your response to that claim may be that my perception of what Bible translation is should not be affected by changes in the world around me. If that was your reaction, I simply ask you to listen as we "take a step back" and look at translation from a few different angles. It's my hope that this paper will stimulate our thinking and our conversation

as we contemplate not only translation itself, but also the role we have or hope to have in the global Scripture translation movement.

The second preliminary statement is an invitation for you to listen in on some aspects of my *personal* journey through my thirty years in different capacities in SIL. My assumption is that many of you will identify with at least some parts of my story. If not, you probably know someone who has experienced similar things…

My third statement has to do with change. True change is not something that can be imposed. Even when change is gently suggested, it takes time for people to feel the need before they eventually buy in to the change. Change takes root best when we have a growing sense of need for change—there's often a "tipping point" that sets the process in motion. We heard from Grant Lovejoy Sunday evening about a very significant change in the acceptance of storying strategies that has taken place over the last decade. I know that I've changed over these thirty years and I encourage us to think of change as **merely part of being creatures**. Only the Creator is unchanging—which I suggest to you is something we can't even begin to fathom.

Fourthly, in SIL we value using a "scholarly approach" to the issues we encounter. One of the most significant dimensions of a scholarly approach, as we're attempting to apply it in SIL's International Language Program Services, is its **multidisciplinary** character. No single academic discipline provides all the tools necessary for carrying out our work. This is a value that I believe is deeply ingrained in us: we see the value of looking at things from various disciplinary angles. A multidisciplinary approach acknowledges the limitations of any one discipline or theory and this should foster good community in which we need each other and need the perspectives that other people have to offer.

The fifth and final preliminary statement is that **asking probing questions** about what something really means is not evidence of disbelief or disrespect. We need to ask ourselves the kinds of questions that others ask us or would like to ask us about what we do and why we do it. We need **questions seeking understanding.** On Saturday, Phil Noss led us in a brilliant discussion of inspiration and revelation. We need to ask ourselves probing questions about these beliefs, presuppositions, and commitments—not out of disbelief or disrespect, but with the genuine spirit of inquiry and the desire to understand—that Phil demonstrated so well. So, as you listen to me this morning, please understand that a probing question about how or why we do something is NOT my way of saying we've done these things in a wrong or misguided way. The questions, rather, come out of a genuine desire to understand what we do and what motivates us to do what we do, so that we can better tune the strings of the instrument we've been called to play. I encourage us all—myself included, of course—to realize our need to listen and learn as we ask ourselves some challenging questions.

So, here's the first question: What is TRANSLATION?

Translation *(hand out 3x5 cards for them to write definition of translation)*

For many of us directly involved in the process of translation, it makes sense that our first thoughts may be of some of the mechanics of that somewhat elusive process of transposing one thing into another. We may think of problems and impossibilities or we may think of opportunities and new possibilities. Rather than *process*, some of us may think more of the *product*—a very unfortunate commercial term—but, alas, we do like alliteration… We've read books on the *Theory and Practice* of Translation, the *Science* of Translating and we've taken or taught courses on Principles of Translation. One of the potentially unfortunate consequences of thinking of translation in terms of Theory and Practice is that these two things seem to go together, like bread and butter, and might seem to be all we need—as if there's nothing else

beyond *Theory* and *Practice*... Of course, this all depends on how inclusive or expansive your definition of translation is. Hold on to your cards and think about your definition as I proceed.

In my role as *Translation* coordinator, I ask myself all the time: What do I coordinate? Now, that's a challenging question!, but allow me to tease out some possible answers and I think you'll see how fundamental this question is to what I do or should do in my current role.

Here are some possible answers:

TRANSLATION *PROGRAMS*:	where should translation be done, with which partners, and how should they be administered?
TRANSLATION *POLICIES*:	what administrative guidelines for translation need to be in place for an organization like SIL?
TRANSLATION *PRINCIPLES*:	how is good translation done, what are the guiding principles?
TRANSLATION *TRAINING*:	what are the best methodologies for training and what should training programs provide?
TRANSLATION *PROCESS*:	what source texts do we translate from and what is the proper role of exegesis and the biblical languages in this process?
TRANSLATION *SCOPE*:	what selection of Scripture books or which related materials should be translated in different situations?
TRANSLATION *THEORY*:	which theories deal best with the issues and challenges faced in the world's diverse linguistic communities?
TRANSLATION *RESEARCH*:	what new trends are there in translation and related disciplines that our colleagues should be aware of and how can we sponsor research that will enhance what we currently do?

TRANSLATION *QUALITY*:	how are good translation and consulting standards established and maintained in very different situations around the globe?
TRANSLATION *ENGAGEMENT*:	what are the best practices for good engagement with Scripture?
TRANSLATION *IMPACT*:	what is the anticipated impact of Scripture in the church and community?
TRANSLATION _____:	?

As I've considered these dimensions of translation—and what it is I'm supposed to be doing—I've realized that, historically, a lot of our thinking has been about *how we do translation* and much less about *what does translation do*? There has been a lot of thinking about the making of *effective* translations and less about the *effect of* translation. In an SIL context, this has typically—but not always—meant a lot of attention given to the process of producing a good translation as a linguistic activity, but not as much focus on the cultural impact or phenomenon of translation. I think we've all known for a long time that we can produce skillfully crafted translations that have an unfortunately limited impact. The skill of translating well is undoubtedly important, but it's only one piece of the whole. I encourage us to look up from the translation desk and ask: what is it that I'm really involved in here?

I've never forgotten my experience one Sunday afternoon on one of my frequent visits to churches in Mapuche communities. I had traveled with a local pastor approximately 2 hours from my home in southern Chile and was standing outside, talking with those who had gathered on that crisp autumn afternoon. I remember looking up from where we were standing and seeing the smoke rising from homes scattered across the mountains surrounding the church. I can still see myself standing there, with my heart and mind asking me

questions like: What am I doing here? Why am I here involved in translation? What will be the impact or effect of this Scripture translation? Who will be impacted by the new Mapuche translation I have in my backpack? Will it impact this small group of people standing around me here? Will it impact those who are scattered across these mountains and beyond? It was one of those moments that marked me from that point onward. It certainly wasn't the first time I had thought of Scripture use or impact, but it left a lasting impression.

I have no illusions that what I'm saying here is entirely new, but as stated previously, I'm encouraging us to look up from the desk—look up from the details—and gain the broadest possible view of translation, and all that it entails. If you haven't read Dye's *The Bible Translation Strategy*—or haven't read it recently—I highly recommend that you do. For example, he says:

> Some translators put considerable effort into convincing the believers to use vernacular Scriptures. Their efforts seemed to help somewhat, although the level of interest seemed to primarily depend on factors the translator did not control. … Further research is urgently needed. 255-6

I'm aware, of course, that other research has been done, but I join my voice with Dye and other colleagues to say that further research is still urgently needed. As a small hint of what will come later, one of the benefits of becoming familiar with the Translation Studies literature is that we find discussions of some of these factors that are out of the translator's control. We don't end up controlling these factors in some manipulative way, but we do gain an appreciation of or clearer understanding of them and how they impact our work.

Let's consider for a moment the following citation from Van Engen's preface to *Paradigm Shifts in Christian Witness*:

> I can remember heated debates among the missionaries about the role of anthropology in their mission strategy of Bible translation, evangelism, church planting, and leadership formation among the Mayan peoples of Chiapas. As I remember it, there were three viewpoints. Some of the early members of Wycliffe Bible Translators believed that the only thing the Mayans needed was the Bible in their language. The pioneer missionary of our Reformed mission, John Kempers, believed that the Mayans needed biblical preaching, theological teaching, and leadership formation. But some of the newer recruits like Albert De Voogd had begun to read Eugene Nida and a number of secular anthropologists and felt that what was needed was an in-depth understanding of Mayan worldview in order to learn indigenous Mayan thought forms and means of communication… xiii

Was Van Engen's perception correct? Did the colleagues referred to here *really* think that the *only* thing the Mayans needed was the Bible in their language?

I've never forgotten a conversation I had with a former Americas Area administrator. I can still see the place where I was driving our Suzuki jeep on the road through a Mapuche community when this conversation took place. It was in our final months in Chile, right around the time of the final consultant check on the Mapuche New Testament. I was expressing my desire to stay and continue working with the Church. I knew, of course, that the completion of the NT was the goal we had set out to accomplish, but in another sense, it was only the beginning… The response I remember hearing that day in our yellow jeep was: "That's not what we do... There are others who focus on that…"

I knew then, as I know now, that translation was the specific task that I was expected to do, but I can't help but wonder about some of the unintended consequences of such a task-specific-focus. I should clarify that I wasn't only sitting at the translation desk—I taught at a local university for several years, presented papers at the meetings of the Chilean Society of Linguistics, was involved in several university sponsored research projects, and was involved for many years in a regional interdenominational pastors council, but my perception of translation then is very different from what it is now. This changed perception may have very little direct impact on *how a particular verse or chapter might be translated*, but that kind of pragmatic

concern—as important as it may be—is not all that should concern us. This is more about underlying sets of assumptions or presuppositions that we bring to the desk as translators or consultants.

For example, let's consider briefly what I assume to be a core belief for most of us: **the sufficiency of Scripture**. I'll remind you of my third preliminary statement above: asking probing questions about what something really means is not evidence of disbelief or disrespect. In the paper I presented at Bible Translation 2008, *The Impact of Theological and Hermeneutical Presuppositions on Translation*, I briefly explored several points in a section titled *The Translator in the Mirror*:

① Immanence or Transcendence

② The Clarity of Scripture

③ The Canon of Scripture

Looking at the Sufficiency of Scripture is part of my ongoing reflection and research in this area. This requires looking into not only the Scripture that supports this belief but also the particular circumstances involved in the process of formulating a statement of this belief. This is a fascinating study in itself, but the more intriguing part for me is to contemplate how such a belief—or variants thereof—can or may impact how translators conceive of their task. The kinds of questions I'm asking myself regarding the Sufficiency of Scripture are whether a certain way of holding to this belief may in fact promote the kind of thinking referred to by Van Engen that "the only thing the Mayans needed was the Bible in their language." We can, of course, ask whether Van Engen's perception is what that particular group actually believed, but if I or you affirm our belief in the sufficiency of Scripture, does that mean we think that the Bible is the *only* thing we need? If we say we believe it, do we actually live that way? There's certainly

enough in Scripture that speaks of the role of pastors and teachers as well as speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that makes it seem apparent that there is room for other things. So the questions which I don't have time to answer here are: what does sufficiency mean? Does a particular view of sufficiency impact the translator's perceptions of what his or her community needs? Or turning these questions on their head, does a belief that people need supplemental helps of some kind deny sufficiency? After all, how can you add to something that's already sufficient? I only need to take vitamin supplements if my body's chemistry is deficient in some way, so do supplements imply that the Bible is deficient in some way? As I said, I can't answer these questions here—I'll just leave them with you as examples of what I'm grappling with. This kind of question needs to be asked as agencies and publishers consider producing more and more study Bibles and other related materials. We need to examine what it is that really motivates us to promote certain strategies in our translation efforts. Asking these questions may also help us to understand why others may hesitate about our new strategies…

My research interests—and the search for answers to my questions—have led me into a variety of fields including Translation Studies, to which we now turn.

A Basic Overview of Translation Studies

Translation Studies has been recognized as a discipline for almost forty years. The name Translation Studies is attributed to James Holmes in his 1972 article, "The Name and Nature of Translation Studies." Holmes proposed that Translation Studies has

> two main objectives: (1) to describe the phenomena of translating and translation(s) as they manifest themselves in the world of our experience, and (2) to establish general principles by means of which these phenomena can be explained and predicted. 184

According to Mona Baker, as cited by Mojola and Wendland in their important article "Scripture Translation in the Era of Translation Studies," Translation Studies is

> the academic discipline concerned with the study of translation at large … understood to cover the whole spectrum of research and pedagogical activities, from developing theoretical frameworks to conducting individual case studies to engaging in practical matters such as training translators and developing criteria for translation assessment. (Baker, 1998: 277)

As an activity or process, translation has been around for centuries, so the move toward establishing the discipline of Translation Studies was to create legitimate space in the academy. Rather than translation merely being subsumed as part of classical or modern language departments, the creation of Translation Studies as an actual field of study gives a validity to the discipline that was not otherwise possible.

Key Concepts of Translation Studies

The following sections are brief glimpses of some of the main concepts in the Translation Studies literature. There's no time here for either a comprehensive or an exhaustive treatment, but I hope this will give a good taste of what you can expect to find in the literature:

- *Visibility-Invisibility*

Lawrence Venuti is one of the main scholars who has written about the phenomenon of the invisibility of the translator. In the simplest terms, this is the accepted—but perhaps unacceptable—practice of not acknowledging the translator when many translated works are published. Venuti writes, "the more fluent the translation, the more invisible the translator, and, presumably, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (Venuti, 1-2). In other words, the quality of a translation—at least in some cases—seems to be determined by how well the translator has remained behind the scenes, invisible.

It might be argued that Scripture translation is a unique case with special considerations. There are, undoubtedly, situations where it is preferable for the translator's identity to be

unknown, but have we considered other situations where knowing the translator's identity might in fact be a positive factor for the community's acceptance of translation?

Another aspect of this notion of the translator's invisibility is the assumption that a translator *actually* can remain invisible, being merely the pen through which the translation is written. This overlooks the active, interpretive role that translators have. We need to think carefully about the implications of these assumptions and I think the Translation Studies literature on this topic can help us. Our agencies may have policies and consulting practices that attempt to filter out theological biases that might creep into our translations, but have we grappled adequately with the reality of the inevitable traces left behind by the translator? It's not really consistent for me to affirm belief in the translator's invisibility when I know that translators with certain personalities and abilities are sometimes chosen for books like Romans, not to mention looking for gifted poets to translate Psalms. One of the things we appreciate about Scripture itself is the fact that traces were left behind by the authors. Can translators be expected to be different?

- *Domestication-Foreignization*

There are many considerations that impact translation decisions. Some dimensions of style are related to this topic of domestication-foreignization, which, according to Venuti, deals with

> the question of how much a translation assimilates a foreign text to the translating language and culture, and how much it rather signals the differences of that text. 148

I think it would be safe to assume that many of us trained in the era of dynamic equivalence and meaning-based translation, operated with the assumption—to use the terms being discussed here—that a good translation would not sound foreign to the receptor audience. So, why—you may ask—would we want to consider this continuum of domesticated to foreign

as it applies to Scripture translation? Well, allow me to ask the question from the other side. Do we really want to produce fully domesticated translations that leave no hint of their origin?

We sometimes discuss the need for respect of the historical character of the biblical text and I suggest that the literature on domestication and foreignization can give us some valuable food for thought as we consider appropriate translation styles in the contexts where we work. For example, Venuti "bemoans the phenomenon of domestication since it involves 'an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to [Anglo-American] target-language cultural values'" (Munday, 146).

Munday mentions Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam as an example of domestication, stating that Fitzgerald

> considered Persians inferior and felt he should 'take liberties' in the translation in order to 'improve' on the original, at the same time making it conform to the expected Western literary conventions of his time. 128

A review of this work stated that

> These verses, which we Anglophones have come to intone as though they were scripture, are not those of Omar Khayyam (meaning Omar the tentmaker in Farsi), but those of a less celebrated Victorian poet, Edward FitzGerald. Our affection for the rhyme scheme, the alliteration, the meter, the very image the words evoke, is not for Omar, but for his translator, Edward FitzGerald. It was not Omar who wrote, "oh, but the long, long while the world shall last," but FitzGerald. FitzGerald translated this Twelfth Century poetry in the very early years of the Nineteenth Century, seven hundred years after Omar. It is FitzGerald to whom we should be grateful. (amazon.com)

Here we find the intersection of the current and the preceding topic: the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam is a very domesticated translation done by a very visible translator. It's a curious twist because the Translation Studies literature seems quite favorable toward the visibility of the translator, but not that positive about domestication. The point, of course, is that it's not a matter of making a simple either-or choice, but rather finding the appropriate place on the continuum of domestication or foreignization and the proper degree of visibility of the translator.

So, what do you prefer in your Scripture reading, a domesticated translation or one that tends to be more foreignized? Is your preference what you would also recommend as the best translation for some other person or community? Is one better translation than the other? Is this a matter of audience preference? In Scripture translation, I would say that Eugene Peterson's *The Message* would be an example of a domesticated translation done by a very visible translator. It seems, however, that this is a case where we appreciate the visibility of the translator since it makes it very clear that his perspectives and choices will be quite evident.

It's my suspicion that we all have an idea of what we consider to be the ideal translation and our ideals will be found at various points along the continuum of greater or lesser domestication. The question we need to be asking ourselves is what is behind our perceived ideals? What motivates our own choices or preferences? We all have presuppositions that affect our thinking about translation. Of course, in the translation projects where our agencies are involved, answers to questions of visibility-invisibility and domestication-foreignization can only be found in community and in context.

As I continue to work on developing a theology of translation, I ask myself if there is a *singular* theology of translation—or perhaps we need a theology of translationS. What does the incarnation really have to say about translation style? Does the incarnation have implications for the discussion of domestication and foreignization? Or are the differing degrees of domestication and foreignization we see in various translations, a reflection of the mystery of the divine and human in the incarnation? Can we really extrapolate from what we think we know of Jesus' language competencies in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek to the style of translation we need to produce? I'm sure the incarnation has implications for how we conceive of translation, but I'm

not sure that the incarnation is the only consideration in defining translation style or the appropriate degree of foreignization.

What I do know, is that the Translation Studies literature about these topics has prompted me to think in new ways about these questions. Perhaps domestication and foreignization don't provide the best lens through which to search for an answer to this specific question, but looking through this lens has brought other things into view on the translation landscape that I hadn't seen before.

- *Translation as Interpretation*

"Translation is not interpretation. Interpretation is what others do with the translation." Or so I used to think. There's insufficient time here to explore the factors that contributed to this belief—it's the topic of another paper—but two of the key factors I will mention here are:

- MODERN, SCIENTIFIC NOTIONS OF OBJECTIVITY

  In the modern era, credibility for an academic discipline was gained by demonstrating the scientific character of that discipline. It makes perfect sense in this context that the title of Nida's 1964 textbook would be *Toward a Science of Translating*.

  The scientist is an outside observer and, by applying proper procedures, arrives at an objective analysis of the data. Many of the procedures of grammatical-historical exegesis are built upon this foundation, with the assumption that an objective analysis of the text is possible. This analysis is very compatible with the

- LINGUISTIC MODEL OF TRANSLATION

  The linguistic approach to translation has been a central part of SIL's philosophy. This approach, developed in parallel with the growth of Descriptive Linguistics, has yielded many benefits and good results around the world.

One of the evidences of Linguistics having center stage in the translation process is the tendency to look first for linguistic solutions to translation problems. The cultural turn in Translation Studies would argue for at least an equal role for cultural solutions.

- *The Cultural Turn*

I'm denying neither the importance of language nor the benefits of Linguistics, but I think we do need to interact with the Translation Studies literature on the "cultural turn" which argues for giving "the cultural context at least equal footing with the linguistic context" (Long, 5).

Of course, the cultural turn is not limited to Translation Studies. The cultural turn has been felt in Linguistics by the dehypenization and broader acceptance of Sociolinguistics. In fact, can we even conceive of a Linguistics with no social dimensions? Within Biblical Studies, the cultural turn has given Social Scientific Criticism a greater role in the analytical strategies of the biblical scholar. In *Reading from This Place*, Fernando Segovia wrote in 1995:

> This gradual turn toward the reader on the part of both literary criticism and cultural criticism eventually brings biblical criticism face-to-face with the question of real, flesh-and-blood readers, and, in so doing, shifts it into a very different model of interpretation with its own mode of discourse and theoretical spectrum. 3-4

Within the field of Bible translation there have also been significant voices such as Ernst Wendland's 1987 book, *The Cultural Factor in Bible Translation: A Study of Communicating the Word of God in a Central African Cultural Context*, Shaw's 1988 *Transculturation: The Cultural Factor in Translation and Other Communication Tasks,* and Harriet Hill's 2006 *The Bible at Cultural Crossroads: from Translation to Communication*.

At the beginning of my paper, I cited Lynne Long who speaks of giving the cultural context and the linguistic context "equal footing." I understand this phrase in the context of what

some in Translation Studies have called the "excessive concern with linguistics" (Matthew Wing-Kwong Leung, The Ideological turn in Translation Studies, 132). Long was arguing for space for cultural considerations. I would prefer to step back from the culture or language question and begin with the notion of **identity**, of which language and culture are integrated facets of one whole. It is possible to tease out certain aspects of language and/or culture for specific analytical purposes, but they're inseparable.

What, then, are the implications of this "cultural turn" for Bible translation? What would it mean to view translation as a cultural phenomenon rather than just a linguistic exercise? For starters, it would mean the evaluation of a broad spectrum of factors related to multicultural identity, of which language is only one factor. It would likely mean an assessment of the factors that contribute to optimal cultural reception of translation—perhaps this is where we find some of those factors that are out of the translator's control. I'm aware that these kinds of factors are being considered in many situations—my point here is that the Translation Studies literature can help us in our formulation of a principled basis for certain strategies that may seem to depart from traditional practices. This may involve considerations of non-print media, but I'm thinking more broadly than just whether we utilize an oral strategy.

In a pilot project with the Mapuche translation team in Chile, we worked on the translation of several Old Testament songs, such as the songs of Moses and Miriam in Exodus 15 as traditional Mapuche ül. If these songs faithfully communicate, this may not be just an optional oral strategy, but the optimal strategy for translation of this genre. It could be argued that these songs as traditional Mapuche ül are not "direct translation" because they use repetition and other features of traditional ül, but what are they? Are they overly domesticated renditions of the

biblical text? Perhaps, but I suggest that an answer to questions like this cannot be found by considering linguistic criteria alone.

- *Ethics*

I've also come to realize that questions of style are actually ethical matters. Who gets to make the decision on which style is most appropriate for a certain community? This reminds me of the title of Webber's fascinating little book: Who Gets to Narrate the World? I don't plan to go into more detail here, but we do need to be aware of the discussion that has been going on for several years regarding ethical concerns in Scripture translation since most, if not all, Scripture translation projects inevitably involve someone making decisions about what someone else needs. We need to be sensitized to the dimensions of power that are inherent in such decisions. Of course, I also need to be sensitive to the ethical concerns potentially raised by telling you that you need to be sensitized to this…

- *History of Biblical Interpretation*

The history of Biblical Interpretation is not a subfield of Translation Studies, but there are many interdisciplinary connections. My studies in this field have resulted in what is often referred to as "hermeneutical humility." One dimension of this is a deepened appreciation for the continual work of God in the Church across the centuries. Another dimension is a humble awareness of where we fit in the whole flow of history. An understanding of this history can give us important perspective on issues that are being discussed today. Knowing how things have been discussed in the past is an important part of knowing how to approach issues today.

To play off of the title of Webber's book, we learn that many different groups or different peoples have *narrated the world* of biblical interpretation throughout the history of the church. Indeed, an important benefit of this historical study is developing a sense of the influence of different historical settings on biblical interpretation. One of the classic examples is the

intellectual milieu within which the Reformation took place. God does not work in a vacuum, but rather through the history of his world, so all of history is intricately woven together. It only makes sense, then, that our historical setting is interwoven with what God is doing in the world. The intellectual milieu of the twentieth century was the fertile ground in which God grew the largest Scripture translation movement up to that time. Many of us were trained and have worked in this setting.

An understanding of this history is one of the best ways to see that the intellectual milieu we're living in today has changed significantly. One of the lessons I take away from this history is the need for change, motivated by the desire to respond appropriately to the world in which we live. I'm not advocating change just for the sake of change, but rather being willing to respond in new ways while still maintaining core values and beliefs.

- *Postcolonial Criticism*

You may feel that your willingness to respond in new ways may be tested quite acutely by the mere mention of postcolonial criticism. According to Moore in *Empire and Apolcalypse*,

> Postcolonial criticism is not a method of interpretation …so much as a critical sensibility acutely attuned to a specific range of interrelated historical and textual phenomena. 7

Postcolonial criticism, for me, is sensitivity to the marginalized—something which I think is a value we all share. Some of the rhetoric and seemingly impenetrable discourse in the literature of postcolonial criticism may be challenging, but I encourage us to listen carefully to the voices in the margins. Concern for the marginalized is certainly in view in James 1:27, *Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.* We could spend a great deal of time reviewing all that the Scriptures have to say about justice for the poor and marginalized. For me, listening to the voices of the marginalized is one dimension of practicing biblical

concern for the other. I learn that I'm not in a privileged position to *narrate the world*. I need true hermeneutical humility as I listen to others and learn from their perspectives. I love the sign that I recently learned from Marcela which shows how perspective varies depending on a particular vantage point.

Summary: the Impact of the Translation Studies Turn

The Translation Studies Turn that I've attempted to describe in this paper is actually—as I see it—a natural progression of certain core concepts from my training in anthropology, linguistics, hermeneutics, theology, and biblical studies. The multidisciplinary approach that has characterized so much of the traditional SIL training laid the foundation for viewing things from different perspectives. In Pike's *Linguistic Concepts* (1982, 6), an idea or a theory of knowledge is like a window that gives a particular view, as in the illustration included here. In the early 1980s, books like Spradley's *Ethnographic Interview* and *Participant Observation* introduced me to the "observer's paradox" and the realization that purely objective analysis was not possible.

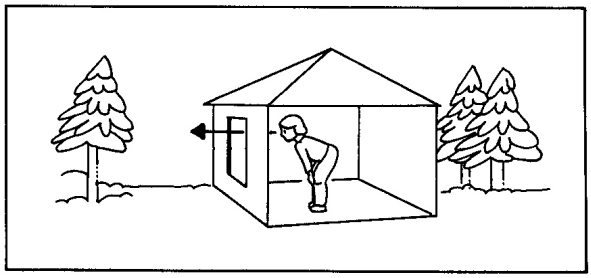


Figure 1.1. A theory, like a window, can look at only part of the data, and in one direction at a time.

The multidisciplinary approach I had from my SIL training was stretched by the exposure to multiple critical methods during my training in biblical studies. These critical methods provide multiple lenses through which to view Scripture. Perhaps for me, they paved the way for an easier move from these criticisms to postcolonial criticism.

The multidisciplinary approach was also valuable preparation for seeing the value of learning from Translation Studies. As mentioned above, there are many concepts in the literature that can challenge us to think in new ways about translation. One of the new research areas for

me is looking at aspects of the cultural reception of translation which comes from seeing translation as a cultural phenomenon rather than just a linguistic process.

In addition to Translation Studies and the other disciplines I've briefly explored here, there are other considerations which impact both my perception of translation and my perception of the role of the western translator in today's world.

A Different World

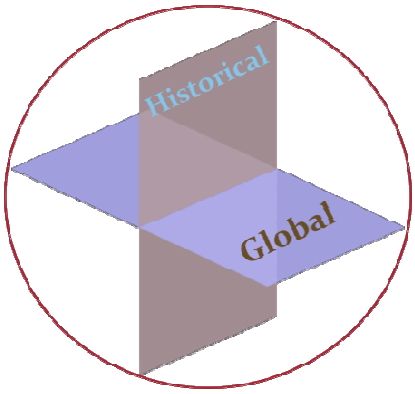
We may differ on the details, but I assume that we would all agree that the world we live and work in today is very different from the world in which most of us were trained to work in Bible translation. The changes that have taken place—whether they're discussed as aspects of postmodernism or globalization—have had a profound impact on how we go about our work in Bible translation.

I encourage all of us, as scholars and practitioners in this changed and changing world, to take time to reflect on the implications for us and the work of our agencies. I also encourage us to think of ways that focused research on aspects of postmodernism and globalization could help us better understand the world in which we live and work. I have just a few observations from my reading and research as I bring this paper to a close.

The Global Church

The growth of the global church is one of the most profound changes in our world that calls us to reflection and appropriate, ethical action. What has been referred to in the literature as the "shift of the center of gravity" of the global church has already happened. We may find this interesting, but we need to be asking ourselves: what is my response? How should my work change in light of this fact? One implication is that we need the kind of hermeneutical humility that I've spoken of here. This is not only necessary for an appreciation of the historical dimensions of the history of biblical interpretation, but also for participation in the global

dimensions of theological conversation in the Church around the world. I believe we are living in a unique era of the Church in which there is an unprecedented availability of diverse theological discourse that needs to be an integral part of our understanding of what God is doing in and through his people. This affects how I approach my work as I consider theological issues that impinge upon translation. For me, responsible engagement in these issues requires an appreciation of the historical and global dimensions of how the Church has understood and understands them—with constant hermeneutical humility that allows me to listen and learn.



In my readings in these areas, I've encountered some interesting ideas such as Social Darwinism, a phenomenon discussed by scholars and found in Wikipedia articles. It's essentially an evolution of or adaptation of the Darwinian concept of natural selection or survival of the fittest. Social Darwinism has been used to refer to the presumption on the part of some societies that they have progressed to some socially superior position relative to other societies. For reasons that should be obvious, I do not hold to this belief. In my studies of the history of biblical interpretation and the current setting in which global theologies are being discussed, I want to bring to our attention an equally dangerous notion which I call *Theological Darwinism*. The essence of Theological Darwinism would be a belief that my theology has survived because it is the finest possible set of beliefs available to humankind and my role in the world is to help others evolve to my stage of development. If I've learned anything from the extensive readings I've done and am doing in the history of interpretation, it's that God's Spirit has always been at work leading, guiding, and growing his Church to a fuller and deeper understanding. There have

been disputes, debates, and differences along the way—we are human after all—but God is in the process of redeeming his Church. This historical and global process will ultimately find its culmination in his Kingdom, not in any one particular cultural setting here on earth.

Critical Self-Awareness

If I allow all the historical, theological, critical, and epistemological streams referred to in this paper to converge, the result should be what I refer to as a "critical self-awareness." This is similar to the "hermeneutical humility" that I've been referring to throughout this paper.

Yesterday, Gilles Gravelle's plenary paper helped us think about important aspects of the changing role of the cross-cultural worker in Bible translation. We are living through significant changes and one of the questions for the translator—especially for me as a western member of a large translation agency—is not *Who Gets to Narrate the World?* but rather, *Who Gets to Translate the Word?* I need a critical self-awareness of how others perceive the Scripture translation activity that I'm involved in and I need the same kind of critical self-awareness of how I am perceived as I interact with others around the world. Looking up from the translation desk and getting a glimpse of the wider world of translation—and the various disciplines that impact translation—has helped me better appreciate my humble position in the historical and global dimensions of what God is doing in the present era of the global translation movement. May my response be to

"*act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with my God*" (Micah 6:8).

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