

Biblical Languages and Bible Translation Practice

Anne Garber Kompaore

agkompaore@gmail.com

Society of Biblical Littérature

Chicago, 2012

Intermediary Source Languages

- Septuagint
- Latin Vulgate
- King James Version
- English: RSV and TEV
- French: Segond/TOB and BFC

Semantic interference of the intermediary source language

- **Triggering an erroneous concept:**
- Gen 26:17: Isaac left there and set up camp in the **valley** of (Mount?) Gerar
- Concept in receptor language: valley > mountain
- Valley < NAHAL = river valley, usually dry except during rains.
- Valley < several Hebrew words depending on the type of valley.
- Receptor language may or may not also have several different words for valleys.

Semantic interference

- **Apparent conflict between the base and model texts**
- Ruth 3:2
- NRSV – winnowing barley
- GNT – threshing barley, BFC battre (beating)
- ZARAH = winnow

Semantic interference

- **Variant translations for Key terms**
- HESED : Ps 103:4
- Fidélité (faithfulness) TOB
- Bonté (goodness) LS, BFC
- Amour (love) PDV
- What does it really mean?

Concepts lost in translation

- **Emphatic features such as:**
- HINNEH
- Word order change
- Infinitive absolute

Interpretational and textual problems

- **Contradictions between base and model texts:**
- Isaiah 8:6
- TOB this people will... **rejoice over Rezin**
- BFC this people will... **lose courage** in the face of (Rezin)

Interpretational and textual problems

- **Contradictions between English and French translations**
- Judges 9:31 ARUMAH
- A place name: Most English translations AND interlinear gloss in the Paratext version
- Meaning « in secret »: All French translations that I have consulted, AND interlinear gloss in the French Bible Society Hebrew - French interlinear.

Challenges and objections

- ‘A little Greek and Hebrew is more dangerous than none at all’:
 - Too literal a translation.
 - Too much dependence on the Hebrew text without knowledge of textual issues.
 - Potential for misinterpreting idiomatic and cultural information within the text.

Challenges and objections

- Too much time to acquire adequate competence
- Too much time consulting and studying the original texts
- Lack of training and resources in adapting to the use of Biblical languages as part of the translation task
- Lack of 'available' African scholars for the task.

THE WAY FORWARD

- Training and resources
- Time and finances
- Mobilized church constituency
- Source language software

Conclusion

- Biblical languages WITH training in how to use them
- Remodeling the Base – Model Text approach?
- Special need for Biblical language and translation resources in languages other than English.