

**BIBLE TRANSLATION: REASONS, APPROACHES AND IMPLICATIONS****Damola E. ADEYEFA, PhD**

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Contemporary Christian ministers and the entire Christian community are being bombarded with several Bible versions in English and other native languages without considering the implications of those translations. Previous studies relating to the significance of Bible translation are relatively scanty in the Nigerian theological research space in contrast to the vast body of translation research available in other continents such as Europe and America, which underscored the relevance of Bible translation via history, practice, criticism, theorisation, among others. This study, therefore, sets out to explore Bible translation's reasons and approaches to bring to the fore its implications in the socio-religious context. Research findings showed that the reason for translations and retranlations is based on the translators' mission of assisting humanity in understanding the truth of God's word. Society should treat Bible translations with caution and respect to understand and retain the original intention. Members of contemporary churches should work intimately with several Bible translations to enhance effective socio-religious relationships.

**Keywords:** Bible Translation, Reasons for Bible Translation, Bible Relevance, Approaches to Bible Translation

**Background to the Study**

The word *translation* is from the Latin word *translatio*, which connotes *carrying over*. It means a transfer, transmission, transference or transportation of phenomena from one end to the other. This implies that translation is passing information from one end (source domain) to another (target domain). That is the reason why the idea of source text and target text or first text and second text; source culture and target culture; source language and target language, and source extract and target extract, among others, is fundamental to translation. Translation is therefore "the process and the product of all forms of transfer of written, spoken or signed texts originating in one language (the source language) into texts that resemble them in some ways in another (the target language)."<sup>ii</sup>

Historically, the origin of translation can be traced to the confusion in Babel of the language community in the biblical representation of the world of man as a monolingual society. Before then, the whole world existed with one language. The monolithic language tendency prompted them to agree on building a tower that could reach heaven. Gen. 11:1-4 NIV records:

Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.

Surprisingly, this conspiracy of the then-linguistic community seemed to achieve its aim as a result of their linguistic clarity and speech uniformity. This uniformity of language and power of speech needed to be checked to stop the Tower of Babel which aimed at reaching heaven. Consequently,

5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. 6 The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." 8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel — because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth. (Gen. 11:5-9 NIV)

Language, a fundamental medium of communication, is twisted to confound human interaction and comprehension. As a result, men had to look for an alternative means of communication and interaction for continuing development and sustenance. Man needed to pass a message across for him to exist and co-exist. This birthed translation in the sense that translation became a means by which a message is passed from one group to the other.

What can be inferred from the above is that translation originated from the Bible and, it is indispensable for human existence and co-existence. Translation, therefore, opens the biblical world of humans; it upholds and enlightens human sustainable development because it reveals and unfolds the communicative reality of hidden truth. Translation opens the window to let in the light; it breaks the shell so that we may eat the kernel; it puts aside the curtain, so that we may look into the most holy place; it removes the cover of the well that we may come by the water.<sup>iii</sup> This implies that translation lightens the apocalyptic, and unearths the concealed realities thereby improving human well-being. It is important, therefore, to know what to translate, what is being translated and how to translate. This is because it is hard to have an immaculate translation without a shift: "All translations, even the best, still have their limitations."<sup>iv</sup> Since language remains the medium of interpreting and propagating the Word of God among human beings and the dynamism of language is undisputable, as we shall see below, Bible translation is not excluded from the limitations and challenges of culturo-linguistic shifts.

### **Biblical Inerrancy and Bible Translation**

The concept of Biblical inerrancy simply suggests that the bible is free from error. While there are several interpretations of the term error vis-à-vis biblical investigation, there are lots of controversies on the absoluteness of the truthfulness, faithfulness, accuracy, exactitude, purity and integrity of the scripture as the Word of God. Tournes in Turretin (1981, p.62-63) notes that the inerrancy of God's Word is not the same as the inerrancy of human beings:

Although we attribute absolute integrity to Scripture, we do not hold that the copyists and printers have been inspired, but only that the providence of God has so watched over the copyists that, although many errors could have entered, they did not, or at least they did not enter the codices in such a manner that they cannot easily be corrected by comparison with other copies or with [other parts of] Scripture itself. So the basis of the purity and integrity of the sources does not rest on the inerrancy of human beings but on the providence of God.<sup>v</sup>

In other words, unlike man, God remains inerrant, which is infallible and his Word should be considered as same.

Theologians have used inerrancy as the same as infallibility in their accounts of the Scripture as free from error or vice versa. Notably, Robert Johnston does not only use infallibility as a synonym of inerrancy but he also uses it interchangeably with inerrancy while underlining the different considerations of inerrancy from the scholastic perspectives. According to Johnston (1979), there are four perspectives of inerrancy: detailed inerrancy, partial infallibility, irenic inerrancy, and complete infallibility:

"Detailed Inerrantists" claim that a commitment to Scripture's inspiration demands that the original copies of the Bible be considered without error, factual or otherwise. "Irenic Inerrantists" agree that the Bible is without error, but believe Scripture itself must determine according to its intent the scope of that inerrancy. "Complete Infallibilists" reject "inerrancy" as a helpful term for describing the total trustworthiness of the Biblical writers' witness, substituting the word "infallible" in its place. "Partial Infallibilists" believe that the authors' intended message is in error at points, but their witness to the gospel is trustworthy and authoritative.<sup>vi</sup>

The focus of this study is not to explore the errancy and inerrancy of the Bible; rather, it purports to look into the significance of Bible translation and the rationale for the unending translational process. We, therefore, agree with the conclusion of Perry John (2001) that "The fine distinctions between errancy and inerrancy can be allowed to dissolve: they may have been vital to biblical authority under the constraints of modern philosophy, but they can become virtual non-issues to postmodern theologians, just as they were virtual non-issues to pre-modern theologians."<sup>vii</sup> This is because more than arguing on the reality of biblical errancy and inerrancy, postmodern theologians like their pre-modern counterparts, are preoccupied with pragmatic advancements in Biblical explorations such as the rationale and relevance of Bible translation.

Every translation represents some slight shifts in an attempt to clarify certain concepts. The shift may be slight and seemingly insignificant. But as long as it is intended to be a shift by the translator, especially to favour a particular theological viewpoint, the damage may be colossal in the long run. The reason is that the translator and his collaborators will eventually capitalise on the shift and the unsuspecting reader would be cut off-guard. Most readers may not check the reading in light of the more conservative rendering.<sup>viii</sup> Newman further illustrates how Bible translations, even when not intended to mislead, could distort the message of the Bible. According to *The Message* (TM), in the translation of Ephesians 5:22 and 24, the verb "to submit" in the original metamorphoses to "understand" and "support." It is not very clear why the translators rendered it that way. The following verses in the same TM brought out the meaning of submission. But someone who wants to avoid the offensive nature of the word "submission" in the context of women's liberation (not to mention that submission is for both husband and wife) may deliberately skip the rest of the verses. We must understand, however, that the verses do not say "understand" and "support." It is the "submission" to authority: "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to the governor, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right" (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

The only difference is that a husband or wife submits voluntarily to his/her spouse for mutual respect out of reverence for Christ.

The reason for the submission for mutual respect may be enumerated as follows: First, translators are not neutral people. Their convictions about the Bible could show through their translations. Second, not all Bible translators are competent in the use of languages of the source text. Third, the motive of the translators may be wrong. The above highlights summarise that liberal translators may take advantage of the ignorance of people and give meaning to words and concepts that are foreign to the authors of the Bible and traditional understanding of the passages so translated. Therefore, while it is helpful to compare translations, it is better to rely on literal and dynamic equivalence translations rather than the free translations that are springing up here and there today.

The problem is that many things happen when the message of the Bible is distorted as it shall be seen below. And now that there are so many translations, it is sometimes difficult to know which translation is good enough. Unfortunately, in a bid to make the meaning of a text clearer, some translations misrepresent the meaning of a text from its original meaning. But we must understand that if we misquote an author, he/she may charge us for misrepresenting his/her viewpoint. Translation is therefore a herculean task that should be handled with extra caution, most especially Bible translation. It is against this background that this study sets out to revisit the reasons for Bible translation and retractions as well as explore Bible translation's approaches to bring to the fore its implications in contemporary socio-religious phenomena.

### **Reasons for Bible Translations and Retranslations**

Bible scholars have not stopped to interrogate the phenomenon and rationales of Bible translation and translators. Adeyefa (2022. p.189) counts some of the scholars in this perspective:

Many Biblical scholars such as Cicero, Martin Luther, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Catherine Winkworth, Lefevre d'Etaples, John Dryden, Samuel Johnson, Eugene A. Nida, Alexander Frazer Tytler, Ajayi Crowder, among others, have contributed to Bible translation and translating. They have engaged themselves in understanding both the immediate language and culture of the Bible and that of the target community involved.<sup>ix</sup>

Their primary concern is to make the Word of God understandable to all and sundry. As a result, there are several translations of the Bible all over the world. Some people opine that there should not be varieties of Bible translations from the ancient original texts. The prime essence of translations and retranslation of the Bible into several languages is to communicate and simplify the gospel message to the entire world in the language that the people understand. This segment reviews the five reasons for Bible translations and retractions submitted in Beegle (1960) as the revisions for reviewing the Ancient English version of the Bible. These reasons can be extended to why the Bible is being translated and retranslated into other world languages. The five reasons are adapted as follows:<sup>x</sup> discovery of more accurate texts; dynamism of human languages; renewal of emphasis on translation intelligibility; new meaning for biblical terms; and improvement in the interpretation of passages.

*Discovery of More Accurate Texts*

The discovery of more accurate texts suggests the emergence of new findings and the unearthing of ancient Biblical written texts. This discovery of more exact Greek and Hebrew texts by researchers and archaeologists provoked retranslations and new translations of biblical texts. For instance, the entire book of Isaiah written in a leather scroll was part of the manuscripts dated from the Second or First Centuries B.C. This scroll made the Revised Standard Version translate Isaiah 33:8 as “the highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceased: he hath broken the covenant, he hath despised cities, he regarded no man”. This makes the verse look as if the same *wayfaring man* in the expression is also *he* who is breaking, despising and not regarding... which is not so. As a result of more accurate textual discovery, a retranslation of the American Standard Version was carried out and the Version replaced the pronoun *he* with *the enemy*. From this example, the discovery of more accurate texts calls for translation and retranslation.

*Dynamism of Human Languages*

Language is dynamic; this dynamism is because it is a means of communication among human beings. Since human beings are faced with inventions of new things, language is changing in response to phenomenal variations. Therefore, how things are named and called as well as what they meant in the ancient days are very difficult for contemporary people to comprehend and interpret. This calls for retranslations of many texts into contemporary languages. For instance, in 1 Thessalonians 4:15, the King James Version reads, “We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep”. The lexical item *prevent* is difficult for contemporary readership to understand. The difficulty arises because, in our time “prevent” means to “hinder” or “stop”; whereas, when the KJV was first translated in 1611, it meant *to go ahead of*. As long as these forms of referential meaning variations and transferences continue in language space, there will always be the need for translations and retranslations.

*Renewal of translation intelligibility*

Bible users’ persistence in clarity, fluency and simplicity of reading also requires translations and retranslations. In other words, the effort to make the Bible easy to read and intelligible to the common man is also one of the factors that begin translations and retranslations of the Bible. Some verses that are difficult to understand by the common people and some expressions that are complex and ambiguous in some ancient translations (such as King James Version in Ephesians 1: 3-14) needed to be broken into several sentential classifications for easy understanding. For instance, physically challenged people such as deaf and dumb may find versions like King James difficult to read. This is a result of some idiomatic expressions, which may need to be simplified for easy understanding. A good example is “children of the bridechamber” (Matt. 9:15, Mark 2:19, and Luke 5:34). These expressions are misinterpreted by the average readers such that most translations in the twentieth century have striven for intelligibility by reading “wedding guests” or “friends of the bridegroom”. While the American Standard Version has “sons of the bridechamber”, a footnote is provided for the “sons” as “*comprehension of the bridegroom.*” If the Bible is going to be meaningful to a common man with less professional assistance, it would need to be translated into a common language. This language must be clear and simple. Therefore, the emphasis on fluency and readability of the Bible is also one of the reasons for several translations and retranslations of the Bible.

### *New Meanings for Biblical Terms*

Diachronically, biblical terms get new meanings. The meanings are a result of new findings. It is important to note that “the meanings for biblical terms are ancient (that is, eternal); it is only our understanding of the meaning which is new.”<sup>xi</sup> Biblical terms, therefore, assume new meanings as a result of the discovery of new documents. The discovery of *papyrus* fragments and scrolls has greatly influenced the meanings of some biblical terms, thereby, making way for new semantics. An instance is exemplified in Paul’s letters to the church at Thessalonica. The King James and American Standard Versions then translated the Greek adjectives as “*ataktos*” (1 Thess. 5:14), the adverb as “*ataktos*” (2 Thess. 3:6, 11) and the related verb as “*atakteo*” (2 Thess. 3:7) meaning “unruly, disorderly, walk or behave disorderly.” The papyri, however, indicate that the words, as used by Paul meant “idle”, idleness, be idle”, and so the Revised Standard Version translates them as, “admonish the idle” (1 Thess. 5:14), “we command you... that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness” (2 Thess. 3:6), “we were not idle” (1 Thess. 3:7), and “we hear that some of you are living in idleness” (2 Thess. 3:11).<sup>xii</sup> Hence, the terms *unruly*, *disorderly* and *walk or behave disorderly* currently assume *idle* with its variants. Equally, in the Old Testament, there abound evidence that new meanings were overruled in some footnotes or endnotes which suggest that a text is obscure in its original rendition. A notable example is in Isaiah 13: 19-21 in the King James Version and American Standard Version respectively. Both versions translate the Hebrew words “*happesira pim*” as *sharpen* (that is sharpener of mouth or edges, a file (emphasise verse 20), while the footnote adds that “this Hebrew text is obscure”. An archaeological discovery of a small weight having an inscription of *pim* or *payim* which is equivalent to the two-thirds of a shekel as well as the fact that Hebrew *happesira* means “the charge”, makes the Revised Standard Version to translate II Samuel 13:21 as “and the charge was a plan for the plowshares and the mattocks, and a third of a shekel for sharpening the axes and setting the goads”.<sup>xiii</sup> New findings are influential to the meaning or clarification of the ancient biblical terms. This, consequently, extends to new translations because words sometimes do have new meanings and usage after a long period, which undoubtedly affects old translations like King James which was translated in 1611. Thus, new translations are necessary and good for contemporary usage. Nihinlola (2014), while referring to the King James Version, adds that “the reason why the recent translations are more dependable is that they are based on better ancient manuscripts and a further knowledge of the ancient languages than were available in 1611”<sup>xiv</sup>

### *Improvement in the Interpretation of Passages*

The improvements in the interpretation of passages are the reasons for some retranslations. Thus, retranslations evolve from “the suggestions of biblical scholars in an attempt to interpret the meaning of a specific passage in the light of the total teaching of the chapter and book”. In other words, the inference drawn from the message of a particular passage, chapter or book clarifies and proffers solutions to grammatical or liturgical ambiguities. A case in point is illustrated in John 1:9. The King James Version translates the verse as “That was the true Light which lightest every man that cometh into the world”. This is a possible interpretation because the Greek does not make it clear whether the expression “coming into the world” goes with “every man or “the true Light”. The vast majority of the twentieth-century translators (realizing that the *important message* in the Gospel of John is not the coming of man into the world, but the coming of the true Light, the God-man Jesus Christ) have followed the alternative possibility (also permitted by Greek grammatical usage) in translating. “The true Light, which enlightens (illuminates, shines on) every man, was coming into the world.”

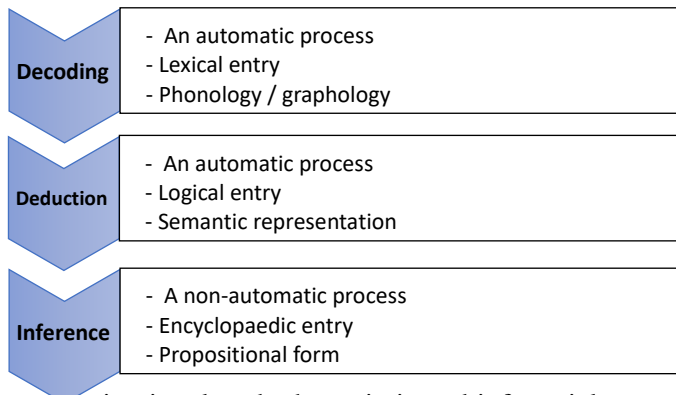
It can be concluded that the reason for translations and retranslations is to assist humanity in understanding the truth of God’s word. Consequent upon this, translations and retranslations depend on biblical archaeological discoveries and continual changes in human language as a result of language dynamism, increasing demand on simplification of the Word of God for common man, new meanings for biblical expressions and improved interpretations of Biblical message.

**Relevance Theory and Bible Translation**

Relevance theory conceptualises three phenomena in the form of entries. These are lexical entry, logical entry and encyclopaedic entry. The lexical entry contains “information about, the natural-language counterpart of the concept: the word or phrase of natural language which expresses it.”<sup>xv</sup> The logical entry consists of a series of deductive logical rules which apply without exception to every instance of the concept. It tends to be relatively stable over time and amongst language users at a given time, and there is a point at which it is complete. The encyclopaedic entry, by contrast, contains a potentially wide and open-ended range of possible uses or instantiations of the concept. The encyclopaedic entry does not contain logical rules which must be applied, but rather a wide range of possible contextual uses.<sup>xvi</sup>

*The Process of Communication in Relevance Theory*

In the process of communication, these three ‘entries’ associated with a conceptual address play a different role in human cognition. The lexical entry contains the ‘handle’ for the concept – the physical sounds or marks on a page whereby it is recognised (both its phonology and its graphology, respectively) and is, therefore, the initiator of the decoding module of the brain. The logical entry consists of the logical elimination rules that are associated with the concept and activate deductive processes. The encyclopaedic entry comprises a depository memory that can be brought to bear to assist the inferential process which will complete the act of communication.<sup>xvii</sup> The process of communication involves decoding, deduction and inference. Goodwin presents it in a diagrammatic form, thus<sup>xviii</sup>:



Communication involves both semiotic and inferential processes: the relevant interpretation is the output of a series of processes involving decoding, explication and pragmatic inference in a context. Importantly, the first two processes happen automatically, whereas the hearer/reader has some control over the last.<sup>xix</sup>

**Relevance Theory in Bible Translation**

The communication process can be extended to translation. This is because translation is a medium of communication. The fluency of communication in a multilinguistic milieu is extensively dependent on translation. Translation, therefore, can be approached from direct and indirect perspectives. In what Godwin provisionally defines as ‘Direct Translation’, the translator attempts to ‘directly’ quote the

original communicator and seeks to provide in the target language all and only the same analytical and contextual implications as were present in the source language, assuming they are processed in the same context. In ‘Indirect Translation’, a looser interpretive resemblance is sought. This is the one in which analytic implications, and even some of the contextual implications, may be lost, but the key contextual implications which the translator assesses as relevant to her audience are preserved.

Conceiving indirect translation as a special case of interpretive use, the requirement for a successful translation is that it is (a) presumed to interpretively resemble the original... and (b) the resemblance which it shows to be consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance, that is, presumed to have adequate contextual effects without gratuitous processing effort... that is, resembles (the original) closely enough in relevant respects. As for all the considerations of relevance, this is of course context-dependent. The requirement for a faithful translation is twofold; produces a target language audience and one which is ‘clear and natural in expressing the sense which should not be unnecessarily difficult to understand.’<sup>xx</sup> By aiming for optimal relevance, just as the original communicator did, the translator as a secondary communicator can be faithful and can convey to the mind of the second hearer the communication intention to achieve relevance by its resemblance to another utterance.

This is the theory-specific definition: rather than an attempt to describe translation in terms of some features of the target-language text, or some proposed relation between the target-language text and the source text, a translation is defined by the communicative intention of its creator: If it is intended to achieve relevance by its resemblance to a source, it is translation. The postulation is that a translation is not determined by the source text or the target language text, nor the relationship between the source text and the target language; rather a translation should tend towards the communicative intention of the creator of the source text. The principle of relevance becomes imperative for this communicative intention to be achieved. This is because it is this principle that guides and determines the translator’s choices. This is very crucial to Bible translation.

For instance, where the semantics of an utterance and its poetic form cannot both be preserved in a target language utterance, the translator will use the principle of relevance as the gold standard to decide what his echoic utterance seeks to preserve. In this case, the translator may decide that the form plays a greater role than the precise semantics. In the field of biblical translation, the great acrostic poems in some of the Psalms and Proverbs present a similar challenge. In Relevance Theory, what makes communication possible is threefold:

1. Shared psychological machinery – speakers and hearers are capable of making inferences;
2. Shared sign system – speakers and hearers use the same semiotics;
3. Shared context – speakers and hearers share a cognitive environment.<sup>xxi</sup>

In Bible translation, therefore, the translator infers from the same spiritual cognitive environment as the creator of the text. These inferences are made available and comprehensible by the sameness of semiotic space. This makes true biblical translation more of an appraisal than an absolute rejection. Appraising Bible Translation through the Relevance Theory, therefore, involves three distinct but inter-related criteria involved in assessing a given translation, namely:

1. The interpretation of the source text: How does the translator understand the source text in its original context?
2. The production of the target text: How does the translator produce a translation that communicates authorial intention in the target context?



3. The relationship between interpretation and production: How does the translator ensure that the target text interpretively resembles the source text?

The above justifies the centrality of theoretical positions to Bible translation. These theoretical orientations foreground the approaches that are engaged by translators in translation processes.

### **Approaches to Bible Translation**

There are several approaches to translation. Fee and Stuart assert that there are three main classifications of Bible translation and the “classification depends on the degree of freedom exercised in translating the ideas, words, idioms of the original language into a new (receptor) language.”<sup>xxii</sup> Some scholars avow that there are two or three main categories of translation.<sup>xxiii</sup> This is because many other approaches are offshoot of these basic approaches: literal, free, and dynamic. This study looks into these three approaches: literal translation, free translation and dynamic equivalence translation.

#### *Literal Translation Approach*

The literal translation is a word-for-word translation. It tends to be exact, accurate and faithful renderings of the original text due to its extreme closeness to the source text. A literal translation attempts to reflect the exact words in the target language as close to the original language as possible. The translator tries as much as possible to give an unembellished sameness. He keeps interpretation at a minimum, leaving it up to the reader to interpret any passages that may be ambiguous. Where the original text is ambiguous, he attempts to reflect that ambiguity in the target text. Where the passage presents a difficult interpretation, he presents the same thing. The literal translation retains the complexity and ambiguity of the Bible's original text without substituting figurative expressions and cultural nuances in the target text. Hence, exegetical choices remain embedded in the literal translation, unlike translations like Message Bible and Good News where exegetical judgments are already being made (The Palmer, 2013). Fee and Stuart give examples of important Protestant literal translated versions of the Bible as “King James Version (KJV), New King James Version (NKJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New English Bible (NEB), New International Version (NIV) and the American Standard Version (ASV). The problem with the NRSV is the attempt to be gender-neutral when referring to people.”<sup>xxiv</sup>

#### *Free Translation Approach*

The Free translation is a rewording (paraphrase), which focuses on the simplification of the Bible for contemporary users at all levels. Free translation is a functional translation which is targeted towards meaning production. It is a close representation of an already exegete text in the form of translation. Unlike the literal translation which is geared towards word-for-word translation, it is a thought-for-thought translation presented in easy, plain and unexceptional language. It is reader-centred because it attempts to translate the meaning with little or no regard for lexical gratifications. It aims at simplifying linguistic ambiguities. Free translation is more than just translating words because one may give a word-for-word translation and still not communicate the message. It brings out the sense of a message in its most simplistic presentation. It is a loose and eclectic translation that gives priority to meaning explication. Some of the Bible translations, which fall under free translation include; The Living Bible (LB), Good News Bible (GNB), New Living Translation (NLT) The Message Bible (TM), among others.<sup>xxv</sup>

*Dynamic Equivalent Approach*

Dynamic equivalent translation presents the message and content of the Bible in their contemporary language. It contrasts formal equivalence which is a kind of literal translation and free equivalent gives little or no consideration to the form or style of the text. Dynamic equivalent translation accentuates a translation that produces a corresponding effect of the source text in the target context using a new equivalent. A dynamic equivalent translation focuses on translating “words, idioms and grammatical constructions into entirely new equivalents (if necessary).”<sup>xxvi</sup> It is a translation that attempts to reflect the passage in its current usage not just linguistic wording or structuring. It tries to make a pragmatic effect of the original text in the target domain. This means that the translation takes into consideration the dynamic nature of language and tries to make the text understandable to the present readers by using the new equivalence of terms. For example, since terms for measurements and capacity like beka, mina, denarii, bushel, quart, shekel, gerah, ephah, seah, cubit, and talent may not be understood by the modern reader, the translator looks at words that are equivalent in meaning to replace them. The New International Version, the New American Bible, the New English Bible, the New Jerusalem Bible, and the Good News Bible are good examples of dynamic equivalence translations.

**Implications of Bible Translation for Bible Interpreters**

All Bible translations that are sourced from the inerrant Word of God truly are worthy of reverence and acceptability for Bible interpreters and other users. The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy: Article X affirms that “...copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original”<sup>xxvii</sup> Both the English and Yoruba versions of the Bible understudied proved to be direct translations from the primal text; therefore, they should be seen and revered as the Word of God by every user.

Both translations could be used concurrently to acquire the full and primal meaning of the biblical truths. It is important to note that using a dynamic equivalent translation makes Bible to be easy to read and understand while using literal translation helps in concealing biblical peculiarity. The distinction is that, while literal is good for higher studies dynamic is better for general studies.

Dynamic translation takes into consideration the dynamic nature of language. Therefore, when we attempt to make the text understandable to contemporary readers, by using the equivalent terms relevant to their immediate language context dynamic translation will be appropriate. For example,

Terms of measurement and capacity like beka, mina, denarii, bushel, quart, shekel, gerah, ephah, seah, cubit, and talent may not be understood by the modern reader, the translator looks at words that are equivalent in meaning to replace them. The New International Version, the New American Bible, the New English Bible, the New Jerusalem Bible, and the Good News Bible are good examples of dynamic equivalent translations.<sup>xxviii</sup>

This kind of translation is ideal for most of the Biblical reading and studying in general Christian congregations. Because getting the word of God into our hearts is perhaps our highest immediate priority, dynamic equivalent translations tend to do this better than literal translations. Christians should regularly use the dynamic equivalent translation in normal meetings. In the same vein, in addition to encouraging people to use these Bibles more, pastors and spiritual leaders should use such Bibles in public worship. The literal translation is a source text-oriented translation. The implication is that it is invaluable for Bible interpreters and scholars who are looking out for the terminological originality of Biblical expressions.

Exegete submits that “a literal translation is best for exegesis for two reasons: it allows original ambiguities in the text to stand...; and it generally renders a recurring keyword in the original biblical text with the same English word in the translations”.<sup>xxix</sup>

The literal translation is good for advanced and expanded studies. Hence, Pastors and Bible scholars should not lean on free and dynamic translations alone. They need to dig deeper by interrogating the deeper structures and mysteries concealed in the original text through literal translation. The suggestion is that literal translation is preferred at the tertiary stage of biblical investigation because, at this stage, the ideal reason for Bible translation is to get as close to the original words as possible. This is easier to do with a literal translation than with a dynamic or free translation which mostly presents a form of equivalence and paraphrasing respectively: when one paraphrases, it suggests that one is bringing out the meaning.

Those who teach advanced-level Bible studies such as teachers, theologians, pastors and Bible scholars should interact with the original texts for a clearer understanding of biblical expressions. Consequently, it becomes imperative to use a more literal translation. This will enable them to have the right (and what it takes) to interpret the Bible themselves, rather than completely depending on interpreted and paraphrased versions such as free translations and dynamic translations which are primarily meant for specific and general classes of people respectively.

### **Implications of Bible Translations for the Church**

The church needs to respect Bible translations and treat them with attention and respect to understand and retain the original intention. Every member of the contemporary church needs to work personally and intimately with several Bible translations. This will free the Church from translational and translatorial bondage resulting from subtle manipulations through Bible translation. A point in time is insinuating theological postulations vis-à-vis translation that are endangering the church. Recalling one or two of these theological postulations regarding Bible translation is expedient.

Feminist theologians claim that “if the Bible were written by females, we would have a different Bible, hence there is a need for a feminist Bible today by way of correct translation. This leads to the need for endless translation based on the growing number of ideologies in the world”.<sup>xxx</sup> For instance, the focus of feminists is to contend with gender disparity through bible translations. One of its significant drives for Bible translation is to revisit assumed male dominance in the language of the ancient Bible translations. They want a translation that will “provide for an inclusive language where the male gender is projected against the female gender. For example, the Greek word *anthropos* stands for humankind, whereas the English translations render it as man in most places”.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Not only this, liberation theology has been critiqued for the use of Marxist social analysis and the endorsement of violence. The dilemma for evangelicals is how to practice Liberation Theology using the method of non-violent resistance. The critical issue is that tyranny, oppression and maladministration are systems that create sinful and enslaving structures that contribute to poverty.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Hence, Biblical retranslation which tends to foreground liberal stances becomes imperative. Bible interpreters, scholars and users have to be very careful in their choices of bible versions most especially in their ministerial assignments so as not to mislead their parishioners and followers/congregation.

### **Conclusion**

This study has recalled the historical overview of Bible translation vis-à-vis reasons, approaches and implications. The article has provided several reasons for translations of the Bible against the common

opinion that there should not be varieties of Bible translations from the ancient original texts. It has developed the relevance of biblical translation to the entire Christian community through the conscious depiction of English versions. Three approaches to translation as well as the interplay between Relevance Theory and Bible Translation are equally examined. The research has concluded that the origin of translation could also be traced to the Bible and its (re)translation is indispensable for human socio-religious existence and co-existence. Bible translation opens the biblical world of human beings; it enlivens and enlightens the grace of God through the communication of realities of hidden truth from generation to generation. The study has concluded that Bible Translation is a herculean task that should be handled with extra caution and that the translators' mission to assist humanity in understanding the truth of God's word is the reason for Bible translations and retranslations.

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## Footnote

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- <sup>iii</sup> Barclay M. Newman *Creating and Crafting the Contemporary English Version: A New Approach to Bible Translation* (USA: American Bible Society, 1996), 1.
- <sup>iv</sup> Alan M. Stibbs, *Understanding God's Word* (London: The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1950), 13.
- <sup>v</sup> Francois Turretini., *The Doctrine of Scripture: Locus Two of Institutio Theologiae Ellencticae* (ed. and trans. J. W. Beardslee; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1981), 62-63.
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- <sup>vii</sup> John Perry “*Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture*”, in Quodlibet Journal 2001), Last paragraph. <http://www.quodlibet.net/perry-inerrancy.shtmlnet>
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- <sup>ix</sup> Damola E. Adeyefa, *Rethinking Charis in English and Yoruba Bible Interpretations: from Biblical Exegesis to Translation Analysis*[Southern Semiotic Review Issue 16, 2022(ii) <https://doi.org/10.33234/SSR> 16.7] 189.
- <sup>x</sup> Dewey M. Beegle, *God's word into English* (New York: Harper & Brothers, publishers,1960), 1-8.
- <sup>xi</sup> Beegle, 6.
- <sup>xii</sup> Beegle, 6.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Ibid., 7.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Emiola Nihinlola. *The Task of Bible Interpretation* (Ogbomoso: NBTS publishing unit, 2014), 29-30.
- <sup>xv</sup> Philip W. Goodwin, *Translating the English Bible from Relevance to Deconstruction* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. 2013), 47.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Ibid.,48.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Sperber and Wilson, 1986, 38-203. Cited in Philip W. Goodwin, *Translating the English Bible from Relevance to Deconstruction* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. 2013), 49.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Goodwin,48.
- <sup>xix</sup> Goodwin, 49.
- <sup>xx</sup> Gutt, Ernst-August, *Translation and Relevance; Cognition and Context* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1991), 53.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Philip W. Goodwin, *Translating the English Bible from Relevance to Deconstruction* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. 2013), 58.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All is Worth*, 36
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid, Pp. 35-37; M. Gorman, *Element of Biblical Exegesis*, Pp. 41-44; W. Egger, *How to Read the New Testament*, 56-59.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All is Worth*, 36
- <sup>xxv</sup> Ibid, 36.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Ibid., 36.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> “The Chicago Statement of Biblical Inerrancy”, *International Council on Biblical Inerrancy: p.3 Article X*, library.dts.edu Accessed 26 April 2020
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth*, 36.
- <sup>xxix</sup> Gorman, M. *Element of Biblical Exegesis*, 41-44.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, “The Function of Scripture in the Liberation Struggle: A Critical Feminist Hermeneutics and liberation Theology,” in *Bread, Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1984), 43-63.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Ibid.,183.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Ezekiel Emiola Nihinlola, *Human Being, Being Human Theological Anthropology in the African Context* (Ogbomoso: NBTS, 2018), 31.