Dr. George Payton, Bible Translation, Session 3, Skills Translators Need to Have

This is Dr. George Paton in his teaching on Bible Translation. This is session 3, Skills Translators Need to Have.

In previous presentations, I've been talking about what is translation and what is the process like, what are the things you need to keep in mind in order to produce a good translation, and what does that look like, what is a good translation supposed to look like? What I'd like to talk about now is what are the skills that translators need to have in order to do translation well? And I'm going to be talking about it on two perspectives.

One perspective is from the perspective of a normal translation person. If you think about contracting someone to translate a document from English into Spanish or Spanish into English, what might that look like? What are the skills that that person needs to have? Then, we'll also touch on what that competence looks like in the Bible translation world, in the process of translating the Bible from one language to another. Okay, so the first thing a translator is typically a native speaker of the target language, and this is from the American Translators Association website. And so I will use the term translator to mean a person who's a mother tongue speaker of the language that the Bible is being translated into.

And as we said, that's often called the target language or the receptor language. So, when I say translator, I'm talking about the local speaker of this language. Okay, translation competencies or skills, and are defined this way, are the complex set of skills needed to carry out the task of communicating the meaning of a source language text into a target language text, which in our case is translating the Bible into the target language.

Much of what I've put together in this presentation has come from a book, Translation Competence, Schaffner, and Adab. And as I said, we're going to start with general translation competencies, and then what are those competencies like in the world of Bible translation? Okay, another thing I want to make clear is when I do a translation job for a person or a company, they send me a document and they say translate this from Swahili into English. And I do that.

I might get a friend of mine to look it over for me, but essentially I'm doing that. And so do I, the translator, have the skills or competence in order to do that work? In Bible translation, in many places, there's a team of people involved in this whole process. It's not just one person.

It is two, three, four. It also includes the community. They can be involved in helping.

And so, what we're talking about is translation competence, rather than translator competence. So, what are the skills necessary in order to translate well? And so I want to make the difference between team skills and individual skills. And in the West, particularly in America, we think of individuals.

So, the individual needs to have these skills. The difficulty is that translation as a group is becoming more of the norm. We might need to change our expectations for each person on the team.

Does every person need to have all the same skills on the translation team? Is this group of people, you have two, three, or four people doing the translation in their language? Do they necessarily all have to have the same skills? So, we want to look at it this way. Does at least one person on the team have a particular necessary skill? And to be honest, it's rare that you will find any one person who's gifted in everything. Sometimes you do, but oftentimes you don't.

Does that mean that the translation can't move forward? Not necessarily. So, what we're really thinking about is, do the members have complementary skills? And is this person a good translator is one way to do it. The second way to look at it is, can this team, this group of people, produce a quality translation? So, this is where we're. You have some people who are offensive; they call them strikers or forwards.

You have midfielders, you have a goalkeeper. Does everyone need to have the same skills on the team? Does everyone need to be a goalkeeper? Probably not. Does the goalkeeper need to be able to dribble the ball? Absolutely.

Does he need to be able to pass the ball? Yes. Does he need to be able to see the field and pass it to the right person? Yes. Does the striker need to be a goalkeeper? No, he doesn't.

Does the striker need to play defense, even though he's up-forward? Yes. So, there is a certain level of skills that everyone should have, they need to be competent at, but these specialized skills belong to only a few people. That's why you have a person like Lionel Messi, now the greatest soccer player in the world at this time.

Why? Because he scores a lot of goals. But you know what? That's not really the question. The question is, can the team win the game? Rather can Messi score goals? Because Messi can score two, three, four goals and still lose the game.

So that's not the issue. The issue is the team competence. And so, translation competence.

What we want is that each person can focus on what they do best. And as we said, the objective is to win the game.

Oh, well, no, I translated Mark 3:16. I translated. No.

Does the whole package communicate well? And did the team together produce that translation? So, it's a group perspective, as opposed to an individual perspective. Group perspectives are more in line with the cultures that we work in that tend to be more group-oriented and have more group decision-making processes than the individual. And so it both fits their type of mindset, but it's also a better way to go.

Because rarely, as we said, do all the people on the team have all the important skills. And so this kind of perspective, coming from a person I've been involved in Bible translation training, can shift the way that we need to translate. If we have certain people who are good at one area of translation, they need training, and they need to enhance those skills.

If someone is gifted in some other area, then they need to enhance those skills. I remember one time I was working on this one translation project up in Alaska, actually one of the Inuit languages. And there were four people around the table.

And two of the people were really good at coming up with a fresh sentence, or a fresh paragraph on the fly. And then someone would write it down. And then they sit there and talk with each other and get the wording just right.

Another person was there, and she was there, and she'd sit there and listen to it. And she'd say, that doesn't make sense to me. So, her input was, is it understandable? Another woman was over there on the side, and she had a dictionary that was produced by a linguist of English together with this language.

And so they would say, hey, do we have a word for X? And she'd say, okay, well, let me look it up. And so, she gets through the Bible. That's the dictionary.

And she's looking through it, and she's finding, we have this word, this word, this word, this word. Okay, the second one, that one really fits this context. That was the thing that she did well.

That's the thing that she really contributed to the team. And so that's what we're talking about: can this team work together? And so, what we really need to do when we do training is empowering each member to excel in their areas of skill so that the team produces a good translation. And a line from a recent movie, everything is awesome, everything is cool when you're part of a team.

Okay, so let's talk about these competencies now. The very first competency, which is fairly obvious, is language competence. What do we mean by language competence? It means being competent in speaking and listening, reading and writing in both the source text, excuse me, the source language, and the target language.

So, if I'm a Swahili translator, can I speak Swahili well? Question number one. Number two, can I understand spoken Swahili? This is especially important when I'm doing interpreting. Number three, can I read a Swahili text? Number four, can I write well in Swahili? Again, speaking and listening, reading and writing in both languages.

What about the BT context? What is language competence in the BT context? Well, it depends. What is the source language? As we know, the source language is Greek and Hebrew. So, how many of us are fluent, even Bible scholars, in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in ancient Hebrew and ancient Greek? Not too many.

So, what do we do? How do we overcome this obvious, as it were, necessary skill to do translation? So, in our context, we do have resources that help us to know how to read the source language and know how to read Greek and Hebrew. We have people to train us in exegesis, breaking down the text, and how to interpret the meaning of the text. Are you able to use resources to arrive at a fairly good understanding of the text? What does it mean? And then, even being able to decipher between different interpretations of the text.

So, if one commentary says, this verse means this, another commentary says, this verse means that. Being able to distinguish and say which one is more plausible? Which one is more likely in this particular context? And so those are skills that can be developed that overcome a lack of competence in the source language. So, in addition to Greek and Hebrew, what about the language of wider communication? So, if in Latin America, that would be Spanish.

In East Africa, that would be Swahili. In Southeast Asia, it could be Mandarin Chinese. Do you need to be competent in the major language of your country? Yes, particularly in our language in Swahili.

In East Africa, our translators in Tanzania needed to know, can you read and write in Swahili well? Are you a good writer in Swahili? And that then actually does correlate with being able to write well in their own language. If you're a good writer in one language, surprisingly, often that person is a good writer in other languages as well. But this is the language that the Bible is written in that they refer to, so they need to be able to read it well.

They need to be able to understand it and break it down. So, we're saying that the major language in the country, speaking, reading, writing, especially when that

language of wider communication is the language that the Bible is written in that they refer to, that then becomes their source text. So, it's not Greek, it's not English, it's actually this other language.

So, language of wider communication competence is important because the team not only do they access the Bible, but they access resources that are biblical resources in the language of wider communication, and those resources help them to do the translation work. Okay, so we have Greek and Hebrew as the source text, the language of wider communication is the source text. Is English the source text sometimes? The answer is yes, sometimes it is.

Sometimes people use a simple English language Bible as the one that they translate from, or at least it's one of the languages that they refer to as they're doing their translation. Okay, sometimes we had an advisor or a facilitator who was associated with the project and then accessed English. Sometimes, you have a translation consultant who helps check the quality, and access to English can help the team understand what the Bible says.

In addition, translation resources, things that are specifically geared toward knowing how to translate; there's more translation-related resources in English than in any other language. You might even say that there are more resources in English than all the other languages put together. What does that mean? That means that someone on the team would do well to know English well enough in order to access those languages and access those resources in English.

So, access to those resources will be a great benefit to the team, so at least one member on the team ought to be able to do that. Especially if English is the source text language that they're using to base their translation on, even more so. But even if it's not, even if you're in Swahili, working in Swahili, working in this local language in Tanzania, a knowledge of English will help the team to do a better job at exegesis because there aren't those resources in languages that the people know.

Okay, so we talked about source language competence. Now we're going to talk about target language competence. And as we said, similar to the source language competence, speaking, reading, and writing in the target language.

That means if you're a speaker of the 1G language, in order to be a translator, you should be able to write well in 1G. Speaking ability is not enough. Why not? Because writing is really an unnatural way of communicating.

It's something that is acquired. It takes practice—practice, practice, practice.

Why, for those of us in America at least, you take writing from 1st grade up to 8th grade. You're done. You're 12 years old.

You know your language, right? No. What do you take in high school? You take English composition. How to write this paper.

How to write a research paper. Okay, fine. You're 18.

You're done, right? No. What do you take in college? You take two years of English Lit. You take, again, more writing languages, more writing courses.

It's not a given that everyone who speaks writes well. I've had people that I have worked with as a TA, some profs of mine in seminary, and they said, okay, can you grade the papers of these grad students in our class? And I was shocked to see how poorly they wrote. And they've been through four years of college.

And I'm going, oh my gosh. Okay. It's not a given.

That someone who speaks well and writes well. Especially, what about in the case where we were, you have a brand new alphabet. They have never written anything in their language.

They have no exposure to any kind of literature in their language. How do you overcome that? And there's a new alphabet. They just have this, and you overcome it through practice.

That reading and writing go together. The more one reads, the better writer they are, and the better their writing ability increases. Linguistic knowledge of the target language is also beneficial.

Typically, we don't sit around and think about the grammar of our own language. Having a person on the team that did linguistic research, then they can discuss the features of the language. So, for example, how many of us sit around and say, you know what, it's really beautiful that English is a subject-verb-object language, and the subject comes first in the sentence, then the verb, and then the object.

And when you have a noun phrase, you have the White House, you have the article first, and then you have the adjective second, and then you have the noun third. How many of you fogged out about a minute and a half ago when I started all that? We don't talk like that. We don't think like that.

But when it comes to writing well, you need to say, this is not a well-constructed sentence; let's change it so it's a better-constructed sentence. And we've seen this with our translators in Africa. When we sit down with them and start talking to them about their language, we start bringing out these things about their language, and they go, gosh, you're right.

They appreciate that because it gives them more confidence and skills than the average person in their community has. And so they gain this linguistic or, let's say, grammar knowledge, which is beneficial to the team and in producing the final product. So we dealt with language competence as the first one, textual competence, being conversant with the type of text or the genre in the source language, and what you typically hope to find in that type of text in the target language.

And it's not always the same. So, what are the common parts of this text type? So, if we were to think of a sports article, what are you going to hope to find when you have two teams that played each other? It's going to be structured similarly to other sports articles that you've read. So you want who played who, where they were playing, who won the game, what were some of the details, who scored more, all those things you're going to expect to find.

So, there are typical parts that should be there when you have a recipe. That's a particular genre if you will. And what do you have? The first thing you have is you're making fried chicken, and then what? What are the ingredients that you need to go out and buy? So, you have the list of ingredients, and then you have what? The sequence of cooking this first, mixing this second, and putting that in third, so you have that order of the activities that you are carrying out as a part of that.

So, for any kind of literature in the language, the person who's doing the translating needs to be familiar with that kind of literature, both in the target language and the source language, starting with the source language first. And what are the things that you need to put into this recipe in the target language to make it sound normal and natural? So there's wording that you're going to expect to find. There's vocabulary.

There's tone. There's a register. The register is the level of formality.

What kind of verbs do you use? The mood is, is it a command? Is it a request? Is it a suggestion? All of those things need to be taken into consideration, and each type of text has its own genre, phrasing, and expected vocabulary. When you write an email to your boss, what is the register? What is the level of formality? Dear Sir, the report that you asked me to write is now complete. I've attached it to here for your perusal.

I'll give you an example of a register. When I was teaching at Biola, I went up to the library, and I wanted to check out a book, so I went up to the counter where the people were that checked out books. And there was a guy, and there was a couple girls.

And the guy said, hey, dude. And the girls go, wait, did you just call him dude? And he goes, well, yeah. And they said, sorry, are you a professor? I said, yeah.

Did you call a professor, dude? What are you thinking? And he goes, well, I just wanted him to feel like he's one of the guys. And the girls go, no, I'm sorry, that is just wrong. You know, hello, sir, how can I help you today? All right, that is tone, that's register, that's vocabulary.

Every type of writing has those expectations in them. Even in an unwritten language, the way that they speak will have these features to it that you have to discover how to match what's in the other language into the target language. And again, we've said this before: who's the audience, and what is the purpose or function of this particular text? So a recipe is there to instruct you through the steps of making that dish.

Whereas something else, like a legal document, has different functions to it. So, in addition to all of these things, there are also discourse features, such as how the text is put together. What is the first part, second part, and third part? How do you connect the different parts? What are the transitions? What are the things that mark a transition? Things like, and then another point is finally.

So when you finally read it, are you expecting anything after that? No, because that's a conclusion statement. And what is the focus? Does a person need to know all the different genres in that language in order to translate? Not necessarily. You can learn new genres, you can read them, you can analyze them, and you can get a feel for them in the source language.

And then you say, what about the target language? What are some typical patterns that we see in this particular genre? And so that can be added later. So you don't need textual competence in everything in order to be a good translator. What about the BT context? In the BT conference, being conversant with the different text types or the genres in the Bible, and their corresponding text type in the target language.

And as we said, they can be the same, but not always. As far as the features and the things that you expect to see in one, you don't always necessarily expect to see it in the other. So the first one is narratives.

And it seems like, well, that's obvious, you just tell the story. The way that you introduce people who are in the story or things that are in the story is different from one language to another. The way that you build your story, you tell it, and you build up to the main point is different from one language to another.

Poetry. Poetry is really, really hard to translate. And sometimes the best way that we can communicate what's there is to translate it as prose.

Maybe less figurative or less using imagery and saying it in a more direct way. Sometimes, that's all we can do. And that, by the way, goes for secular and sacred poetry.

Hortatory. What is hortatory? The epistles Paul was teaching, he was exhorting them, he was encouraging them, he was rebuking them. Parables can be hortatory.

Jesus told parables as a way of saying, go ye therefore and do this. Prophetic books. Prophetic books were often speaking the future, but sometimes it was speaking the present in a way that was really, this is God communicating to us, and this is what we need to do differently.

So, it can be a rebuking kind of thing, but not always. Genealogies is another type of genre that's in the Bible. These are just some of the genres, so this is not a complete list.

And again, does a person need to know all these genres in order to be a good Bible translator? They can learn them as they go along. They can get started on narratives, which tend to be more straightforward, and then they can move into these other genres by doing the research on the source language in the Bible and doing a research on their language, how did they have hortatory or expository teaching in their language, what would be the forms that were used there. Okay.

Another competence. So far, we had language, we had text, and now we're talking about subject competence, which is similar to the text, but it's being familiar with the subject matter that's being translated. And I've heard it said, that you can't write about music if you know nothing about music.

So, you need to be a musician, probably, and maybe even a music teacher in order to write about music. So, you need to have some kind of knowledge of that whole area, not just, oh, I know how to play the trumpet, but you need to know a lot more about the whole thing of the music structure. There are eight notes in the scale. By the way, not every culture has eight notes on its scale.

So, all of that, you can't write about music if you don't know about music. And we have general knowledge that everybody knows about something. For example, baseball, we have general knowledge about baseball, we all know that it's played in a particular field of a particular shape.

And we basically know these guys get up there with the bat, and the other team throws the ball at them, and the guys in the field try to catch it and get the guy out. Okay? And he's trying to go and score a run. So, we all know about that.

How many of you know all the different rules about baseball? How do you know that the runner is out at first base? What is the rule for that? There are so many different rules and technicalities about baseball that I have no idea. My friend, though, is a baseball coach, and he knows them all. Why? Because he's a specialist in the field.

So we can have general knowledge of the subject, but somehow if it's a specialist kind of text, then you need to have specialist knowledge. And as we said, knowledge can be gained. We have two kinds of knowledge.

We have explicit knowledge, something that you can read and figure out and learn and retain. But then we have tacit knowledge, too. Tacit knowledge is that it's unconscious.

I remember working with my uncle on a particular construction project, and he had some wood there, and he goes, ah, that one's no good, that one's no good, this one's okay, this one's okay. And I'm thinking, how did he know that? And I said, how did you know that? And he goes, I don't know, I just knew. We have tacit knowledge about things.

You can't put your finger on it, but you know it. Why is this a good sentence? I don't know, it just is. So that's that tacit knowledge that we all have, in addition to our explicit encyclopedic knowledge.

So having this overall knowledge and having strategic competence to know how to then communicate that information in the particular text. What about subject competence in the BT context? Familiarity with the subject matter about the book that's being translated. It's really helpful to know that the book of Romans was written by Paul to the people in Rome who were the Christians while he was in prison.

That's a really helpful piece of information. But more than specific books, even general Bible knowledge. Even the knowledge of the Old Testament and what happened in the Old Testament times, the people of Israel that proceeded out of Egypt and came into the Promised Land and took it over, and then everything that followed, plus the New Testament.

So, we're talking about Bible history. Old Testament history, New Testament history, when did Paul come along? We don't need to know the year, but we certainly need to know that he came along after Jesus died. That's a piece of information that's very helpful.

And as we said, the background of books. It's very helpful to know that Paul was in Philippi for a number of years before he wrote his book, that he had a relationship

with them, and that he wrote based on that relationship. And just reading Philippians, you can tell they had a really good relationship.

He really cared about these people. Knowing that he was there for three years is very helpful. You read the book of Colossians, and Paul says in the book of Colossians, I've never met you, but I'm still concerned about you.

And so, different relationship, different backstory. So, knowing that backstory helps us to be able to translate that book. Time frame of when it was written can be helpful.

Who is the author? What is the author's situation when they're writing it? What is the author's relationship to the audience, and how does all of that fit in together? General historical information: what was happening in the world when Paul was put in prison? Rome was in power. They were the military and political power in the world. Why did Paul write the book? Who's the audience of the book? Who did he write to? And also, again, what is the purpose or function of the book? Why did he write it, and what was he trying to say to them? And again, if you don't know about every single book, that can be learned.

You can study and figure it out. So, this is a normal thing that we do as Bible translators. When we have a new book that the translation team has not done yet, the first thing we need to do in order to really understand it is we read the backstory.

We read about the book, we read how the book is structured, and then we start looking at the verses chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and then it makes a lot more sense when we have the backstory in our minds as we're doing this. Okay, cultural competence is the next one. So, some familiarity with the source language culture and the target language culture, with special attention to how culture is reflected in the written texts.

So, what do I mean by that? One of the things that we do is we have expressions that are directly tied to our culture. We have an expression, stepping up to the plate. He needs to step up to the plate.

Where does that expression come from? If you're from America, you know that means it is actually a baseball term. So, the plate is the flat thing on the ground, and he comes up to the plate, and he's standing there waiting for the other guy to throw the ball. But that's not what it means.

It doesn't mean that he needs to go out and play baseball. Stepping up to the plate has another meaning to it. It means he needs to take responsibility, be proactive, and be forthright and assertive in doing the thing that he needs to do.

Something like that. If you don't understand baseball, it's really hard to understand the idiom. So, these are culturally specific knowledge behind the texts that help the person who's doing the translating communicate the message in the other.

And so, they might end up saying in another language, he needs to take responsibility and be proactive. Another thing is cultural terminology, especially with idioms. So stepping up to the plate would be one.

Go with your best pitch is another one. Another baseball term, what does that mean? That means to do what you do best. Lean into that.

And so again, they need to have an overall orientation to cultural trends in the society, but also tacit knowledge, historical information is helpful to have, background information, and knowledge of different subgroups within the society. So, if you have younger people, you have millennials, you have Gen X, Gen Z, you have baby boomers, those would be different subgroups in the society. And how is this uniquely associated with them? Okay, what about in the Bible context? Familiarity with the Bible culture.

Well, actually, there isn't one. So, in the Old Testament, you had the Hebrews, right? But you have the Hebrews, and you had the, all the -Ites, the Ammonites, the Perizzites, the Philistines, you had all these different cultures. So it was a huge cultural complex.

What about the New Testament? Well, you had Greek, right? No, the Greeks, the Romans, all the Hebrews, but then you had the Idumeans, who were actually the descendants of the Edomites and all the other cultures around there. So, there wasn't one Bible culture. And we don't really have enough data on all these different plethora of Bible cultures in order to make sense out of how does this culture differ from that one, from that one, and how is that relevant to the text? So it's really a challenge in understanding all the cultures in the Bible.

However, there are some general similarities between these Biblical cultures. For example, they probably had a similar worldview. They were polytheistic, which means they believe that there's a multiplicity of gods.

So if we think in high school, you learn about Greek mythology, Roman mythology, all the different plethora of gods, that's kind of what polytheism was like. You have studies on the ancient Near East, which was basically the Old Testament times, and the similarities between different cultures. So, they have common views toward polytheism.

The interaction between humans and the spirit world, the fact that there is a spirit world, and the fact that the spirit world does interact with humans, all of those

things are part of this polytheistic view. Another thing is honor and shame. Honor is very, very important, and you work very hard not to draw shame to someone.

And there are other cultural values and beliefs that are common in the Bible times. And so if we get a general picture of how those beliefs function, then we can move forward with that. But also, if we look at non-Western cultures today, they share some similarities with these people.

If you ask people what their ancestors were like, and they believe that the ancestors are around us and interact with us, they might say, oh, you can't know if they're going to be nice to you today. They are capricious. They're nice one day, and they mean another.

Oh yeah? Okay. Do they always give you what you want? No, they don't. Sometimes they do, sometimes they don't.

What happens if you ignore them? Well, then they punish you. What do you need to do to make that right? Well, you need to give them a gift. Guess what? There's a lot of that that's involved in the people in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

So, is it true that that's the case? Do you remember when the Apostle Paul was on the ship, and the ship coming from Jerusalem eventually, and they shipwrecked in a place that ended up being Cyprus? Malta, sorry. And so, the people made it to shore, and Paul was collecting firewood. And as he was collecting firewood and throwing it on the fire, a snake bit his hand.

And so he shook it off into the fire. The local people were sitting there watching Paul, and they said he must have been a murderer because the gods of the sea failed to finish him off, so they sent the snake. That's an act.

You can read that for yourself. What does that mean? That means that those people had this view that the spirit world, the unseen world, is there with powers and principalities, and they do things to interact with and impact human beings. They sent the snake.

How did they send the snake? Who knows? That's what they believed. And then they said, oh my gosh, Paul didn't die. Then what was their conclusion to that? He must be a god.

There you go. So we find that there are a lot of similarities between the way that the local people in some of these traditional face-to-face societies believe, not everywhere, but there are enough similarities that it makes it not as difficult to translate some of these cultural principles. So, we do what we can to study the biblical culture and the target culture, and then contrast and compare the two, and

we try to understand both of them with our conscious knowledge so that we can then eventually translate.

Transfer confidence. The ability to convey the text effectively, efficiently and quickly from the source language text to the target language. Maintaining as many as possible nuances in the source language text using matching nuances in the target language.

Intuitively knowing how to adjust the source language text to fit the target language. So, for example, we have the saying, I want you to come. So, in Swahili you can say that.

So, a literal translation, ninataka means I want, wewe means you, to come, kuja. Ninataka, wewe, kuja. Would that communicate in Swahili? Yes.

Is it the normal way that people talk? No. What would they say? Ninataka, that's the same, I want. Notice that wewe is not there, and kuja is not there.

They have this other word, uje. Uje is actually a form of the word kuja. Kuja means come, and this means I want that you should come.

It's a polite request. I want you to come, in other words, I'm asking if you could please come. And uje is more correct than wewe kuja.

Wewe kuja sounds either like a child or a stranger, a foreigner that doesn't speak Swahili well. Do we want our Bible like that? No we don't. Ninataka, wewe kuja.

No. Ninataka, uje. And a person who's using the language all the time will automatically come with uje rather than wewe kuja.

So, is facility going from language one to language two, and from language two to language one? Just like I said, when I was a translator for doing interpretation, I had to go Swahili to English, English to Swahili back and forth. Think about a person that does American Sign Language. Have you ever watched somebody do that? If not, watch a YouTube video.

It's amazing. So, a person's over here speaking, and they're going like this. And then, the hearing impaired person starts signing, and then they start speaking over here.

They're doing it instantaneously, back and forth like this. Ladies and gentlemen, that is transfer competence. The ability to do that.

So, really it involves thinking in both languages simultaneously. But, it is not the same as being bilingual. Bilingualism is different.

So, let's talk about those differences. First of all, the bilingual speaker. So, you have L1 is your mother tongue language, and you're speaking to someone in your own mother tongue.

So, that's L1 to L1. So, if I'm speaking to you in English, you're speaking to me in English. That is L1 to L1.

A bilingual person happens to know another language. We'll call it L2. They might know more than two, but anyways.

So, you have L1 speaker, then there's an L2 person, and they're speaking back and forth like that. But, you notice it's one direction over here to L1, one direction over there to L2. But it's not at the same time.

When they're with L2 people, they speak L2. When they're with L1 people, they speak L1. Transfer competence.

How does that differ? So, you have a person that speaks L1, and they're speaking to someone in L2, and they're going back and forth in their mind continuously. L1 to L2, L2 to L1. And that thought that goes between languages happens in a split second.

Just as I said, the person that's doing the signing takes very little time in between in order to do that communication. That is what we call transfer competence. And, this transfer competence is the most important competence that a translator needs to have.

So, it's the one competence that ties them all together. That if you have the other four, you're going to be a good writer, but you really need transfer competence to pull that all together and to be able to do this quickly. And, the more a person translates between two languages, the more efficient they are and the better quality translation that they produce.

So, what about foreign language teachers? Well, they did a test once between translators and foreign language teachers. And, they said, okay, translate this text from the other language into your language. And, they were all, let's say, English speakers who also spoke Spanish.

They produced a better translation in English from the Spanish than the foreign language teachers. Why? Because foreign language teachers are not trained to do that. If you train them, they would be just as good as the translator, but they're not trained to think that way.

So, without transfer competence, you can't really translate well. You do need that. As we said, American Sign Language.

And, I met a woman in Tanzania who was naturally gifted at this, and she had no training whatsoever. So, what do you do? You develop an intuition about how to translate familiar expressions, how to translate structures, grammatical structures, how you translate certain words, words with multiple meanings. Which word do you choose in order to communicate this word in a different language if it has more than one meaning? The good thing is that transfer competence can be developed through practice and training.

And, once a person has transfer competence, they can apply it to different languages. BT context, what do we do? Remember what we said about language competence? It's not necessarily a given that we all speak Greek and Hebrew, but that doesn't keep us from being in translation. So, the ability to convey the biblical text efficiently in the target language, keeping as many of the nuances as we can.

Okay, so you have to have language competence to some extent, or someone does, on your team. Textual competence, subject competence, and cultural competence. A person with transfer competence between a target language and this trade language in the country is often able to develop transfer competence between the biblical languages and their language.

And so, a person who's gifted in languages can transfer those knowledge and skills to the biblical context. If they don't have that skill, they can then develop that skill, and then the transfer process can happen. Okay? Just quickly, some other translator skills.

We have non-translation skills that people need to have. Sorry, I'll put that up there. And translation skills, understanding the passage, and study skills.

This is academic work. It's hard work. Critical thinking skills are good.

Being able to compare and contrast things. Using biblical resources is a helpful thing. We have software in translation that we have specific to translation.

Knowing how to draft a particular new text and learning how to transfer it to a third language. Editing your own work is a skill. And, giving feedback to others on their work and helping edit their work is also another skill.

And the accuracy. Okay, so I'm going to stop there. This is a complex process that requires a wide range of skills.

And, those skills, if applied to the entire team, and they're trained in order to develop and enhance those skills, they can produce a translation that is of good quality, that communicates well, that retains the accuracy, and that is acceptable to the people. Thank you.

This is Dr. George Paton in his teaching on Bible Translation. This is session 3, Skills Translators Need to Have.