

Payton, Bible Translation, Session 7, Languages, Part 2, Speech Acts Resources from Notebooklm

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Payton, Bible Translation, Session 7, Languages, Part 2, Speech Acts, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. George Payton's "Bible Translation" course focuses on analyzing speech acts within biblical texts to improve translation accuracy. It examines how implied meanings and cultural context significantly impact communication, emphasizing the importance of understanding authorial intent and shared knowledge between the writer and reader. The lecture uses examples from various languages and cultures to illustrate how seemingly simple statements can have complex, underlying meanings that translators must carefully consider. Payton highlights the contrast between high- and low-context communication styles and how this difference affects interpretation, advocating for a balanced approach that accounts for both explicit and implicit information. Ultimately, the goal is to faithfully convey the original message's intent and impact across languages and cultures.

2. 15-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Payton, Session 7, Language, Part 2, Speech Acts – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Introductory Series → Bible Translation).



**Payton_BT_Session0
7.mp3**

3. Bible Translation: Session 7, Language, Part 2, Speech Acts

Speech Acts and Bible Translation: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. According to Dr. Payton, why is it important for Bible translations to avoid sounding strange to the target audience?
2. Explain the diagram presented by Dr. Payton regarding the transfer of meaning in translation.
3. What does Dr. Payton mean when he says that communication always has a purpose?
4. What are the elements of a conversation that Dr. Payton suggests we should analyze when breaking down interactions in Scripture?
5. What are the assumptions that speakers and listeners share that Dr. Payton identifies?
6. Explain how the example of "honey, we're out of milk" illustrates the difference between a statement of fact and a speech act.
7. How does the story of Dr. Payton and his wife's tea illustrate miscommunication?
8. What is the difference between explicit and implicit information, and how do these concepts relate to the idea of cryptic language?
9. What are the differences between low and high-context communication, according to Dr. Payton?
10. According to Dr. Payton, what should translators do to convey the meaning and tone of the original text to a target audience?

Quiz Answer Key

1. It is important to avoid sounding strange because the more strange a translation sounds, the less acceptable it will be to the target audience, and the less effectively it will communicate the intended message. A key goal is to connect with people in a way that is meaningful to them and the message of the Bible needs to be accessible.

2. The diagram shows that translation involves transferring the meaning and rhetorical function of the source language text (Greek or Hebrew) into the forms of the target language. This ensures that the target text communicates the same intended effect as the source text, which may require using different forms to achieve this.
3. Communication always has a purpose because people generally communicate to influence others in some way. They are trying to get people to understand something, believe something, or do something. This underlying purpose is crucial to understanding the intention behind communication.
4. When analyzing interactions, Dr. Payton suggests considering what was said (the utterance), what type of utterance it was (statement, question, command, etc.), the underlying sense, why the speaker said it, what they wanted the receiver to do, and how the receiver responded. Analyzing these aspects helps unpack the dynamics of a conversation.
5. Speakers and listeners share the assumption that they speak the same language, have a similar cultural background, history, and understanding of social norms. This shared knowledge forms the background against which communication occurs.
6. While "honey, we're out of milk" is a statement of fact, it functions as a polite request for the wife to buy milk. This illustrates how statements often convey more than just the literal information they present, and the listener must infer the underlying intent.
7. In the story, Dr. Payton interpreted his wife's statement, "I'm ready for tea" as simply an expression of her current state rather than a request for him to prepare tea. This demonstrates that the same words can have different meanings and that communication can fail when intended signals and cues are missed.
8. Explicit information is directly stated, while implicit information is not directly stated but is inferred by the listener based on context, social norms, or shared knowledge. Cryptic language relies heavily on implicit information where the speaker expects the listener to infer what was left unsaid.
9. Low-context communication relies on explicit, detailed verbal explanations because there is not a lot of shared background knowledge. High-context communication relies on implicit messages and shared cultural background, allowing for fewer explicit words and deeper understanding.

10. Translators should try to interpret the meaning and function of the source text and then find ways to express those in the natural forms of the target language. It is important to consider how the content of the message would be delivered in that culture to accurately convey the original intent, including any implied tone or mood.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer the following questions using a standard essay format.

1. Discuss the importance of considering both the explicit and implicit aspects of communication when interpreting and translating biblical texts, providing examples from the source material.
2. Analyze how cultural context, as described by Dr. Payton, affects the communication of meaning and propose ways that translators might navigate cross-cultural understanding effectively.
3. Explain how the concept of 'speech acts' can help in the interpretation of scripture and provide a detailed example of a biblical passage that demonstrates the use of a statement as something other than just a statement.
4. Describe the challenges that translators face when working with high-context texts and how they might overcome those challenges.
5. Evaluate the significance of shared knowledge in the communication process, and explain how translation can bridge the gaps created by different levels of shared knowledge.

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Speech Act:** A theory describing how people accomplish things with words, going beyond the literal meaning to the intended effects of communication.
- **Authorial Intention:** What the author intended to communicate to the original audience through the written text, which is a key goal in hermeneutics.
- **Rhetorical Function:** The persuasive or influential purpose of a text or utterance. It refers to the way language is used to create effects on its audience.
- **Target Language:** The language into which a text is being translated.
- **Source Language:** The language of the original text that is to be translated.

- **Cryptic Language:** Communication that is not straightforward but rather uses implicit or hidden meanings.
- **Explicit Information:** Information that is clearly and directly stated in a message.
- **Implicit Information:** Information that is not directly stated but is implied or understood through context.
- **Low-Context Communication:** A communication style that relies heavily on explicit verbal explanations because there is less shared understanding.
- **High-Context Communication:** A communication style that relies more on implicit messages and shared cultural background and knowledge.
- **Register:** The way language is used in a particular context or for a specific purpose.
- **Hermeneutics:** The theory and methodology of interpretation, especially of the Bible, involving understanding the authorial intent and contextual setting.
- **Subjunctive Mood:** A verb mood that conveys a suggestion, wish, or possibility, softening the force of a statement.
- **Literal Translation:** A translation that aims to follow the wording and structure of the source text as closely as possible.
- **Free Translation:** A translation that focuses on conveying the meaning and intent of the source text rather than its literal wording.
- **Rhetorical Question:** A question asked for effect rather than to elicit an answer, often used to make a point or express a rebuke.
- **Rhetorical Statement:** A statement that is not intended to be taken at face value but conveys an implicit meaning or intention.
- **Intonation:** The rise and fall of the voice in speaking, used to convey emotion, emphasis, and meaning.
- **Shared Knowledge:** The common background, culture, language, or other elements known by both the speaker and the listener that enables effective communication.
- **Bi-directional Activity:** The process of translation which includes looking back at the source text and forward to the target text and constantly making comparisons.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Payton BT_EN_Session07.pdf":

Briefing Document: Dr. George Payton on Speech Acts in Bible Translation

Date: October 26, 2023 **Source:** Excerpts from "Payton BT_EN_Session07.pdf" **Presenter:** Dr. George Payton **Subject:** Speech Acts and their relevance to Bible Translation

Overview:

This session focuses on analyzing speech acts – how people communicate, including the explicit and implicit meanings behind their utterances – and how these concepts are crucial for effective Bible translation. Dr. Payton emphasizes the importance of moving beyond literal translations to convey the intended meaning and impact of the biblical text in the target language, which is also a key part of communication. He argues that communication is always purposeful and often cryptic, requiring an understanding of context, shared knowledge, and cultural nuances.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. The Challenge of Literal Translation:

- Dr. Payton uses the example of a "pirate Bible" translation to illustrate how overly literal translations can sound strange, unclear, and unacceptable to the target audience, thus hindering communication of the biblical message.
- He argues, "The more strange it sounds, guess what? The less it is acceptable. The less it speaks to the people."
- The goal is to "preserve the sacredness of the text" while "conveying a communication action."
- The need is to strike a balance between faithfulness to the original text and clarity and naturalness in the target language.

1. Translation as a Transfer Process:

- Translation is a transfer of meaning together with the source text's rhetorical function.
- The rhetorical function remains constant, but it uses the forms of the target language to ensure the same effect is communicated to the intended audience.

- "We want to transfer what? We transfer the meaning together with the source text's rhetorical function. It stays the same, but we do it using the forms in the target language so that we have a target text that communicates well."

1. **Communication as Purposeful:**

- Communication always has a purpose, and that purpose is usually to influence people in some way.
- "Every communication act has a purpose, and usually, it's to influence people in some way."
- The translator must determine the author's intention in order to understand the message and then effectively translate it.
- He encourages viewing the Bible as an "email from God via the author" to understand the author's intent.

1. **Analyzing Conversations (Speech Acts):**

- Dr. Payton outlines a framework for analyzing conversations, focusing on:
- **What was said?** (The literal utterance)
- **What kind of utterance was it?** (Statement, question, command, request)
- **What is the underlying sense?** (What was *really* meant)
- **Why did the speaker say it?** (Purpose and motivation)
- **What did the speaker want the receiver to do?**
- **How did the receiver respond?**
- This framework can be used for any interaction, including those within the Scriptures.

1. **Shared Knowledge and Context:**

- Communication relies on shared knowledge, language, cultural background, and history between the speaker and the listener.
- "They know the same language, and they know how to communicate specific things with the language."
- Speakers assume the hearer shares this knowledge.
- The listener infers meaning based on context.

- Examples like the "yellow buses" and "honey, we're out of milk" scenarios illustrate this.

1. **Cryptic Language and Implicit Meaning:**

- People often communicate cryptically, leaving out information and relying on listeners to infer meaning.
- "The speaker intentionally leaves out some things and they expect the listener to infer or to figure out based on the context and based on what was explicitly said and based on some other factors."
- The focus is often on what is *not* said as much as what is explicitly stated.
- Examples like "I'm on a diet" (to refuse cake) and "I'm low on gas" (requesting assistance) demonstrate how the underlying message can differ from the literal words.

1. **High-Context vs. Low-Context Communication:**

- **Low-context cultures** (like the US) rely on explicit communication and detailed explanations because they assume less shared knowledge.
- **High-context cultures** assume a great deal of shared knowledge, using fewer words and more implicit meanings.
- The Bible was written within a high-context culture, while many modern translations are done by translators coming from low-context cultures, requiring diligent interpretation of implicit meanings.
- Dr. Payton's experience in Tanzania provides a concrete example of how a high-context communication can be missed or misinterpreted in a low-context.

1. **Application to Biblical Passages:**

- **Wedding at Cana (John 2):** Mary's statement "They have no wine" is interpreted as a polite request for Jesus to perform a miracle, even though it was not explicitly stated. Jesus' response "My time has not yet come" is interpreted based on shared knowledge between mother and son and the context of his ministry.
- **Pilate and Jesus (John 18):** Jesus avoids directly answering Pilate's questions about his identity, using indirect language. This shows Jesus intentionally communicating without revealing everything.

- **Mark 14:41:** Jesus' final statement to his sleeping disciples is a rhetorical statement (i.e. Fine, go ahead and do that then.) rather than a question, challenging common translations.

1. **Interpretation to Translation:**

- The translation process involves interpreting the source text, discerning underlying meanings, and identifying the features of the speech act.
- Translators consider how to express these aspects naturally within the target language, adjusting word choice, grammatical structures, intonation, etc.
- He shares examples of how different languages (German, English, Hungarian) convey emphasis and advice, and how those must be considered when translating.
- He also gives examples of how the same phrase can have very different meanings and levels of politeness in Kenyan and Tanzanian Swahili.

1. **Exhortation and Advice:**

- Dr. Payton discusses how advice-giving is expressed differently across cultures. In English the word "should" softens advice but Orma and Hebrew use the future tense.
- He shows that cultural and linguistic norms must be considered when translating statements of advice.
- He states: "The form of the target language conveys the meaning of the source language."

1. **Challenges and Insights:**

- While translators can look to the author's intent, sometimes a text can be difficult to interpret, like when Peter comments that Paul's writings can be hard to understand.
- This complexity underscores the need for diligent hermeneutical methods and recognizing that interpretations may not always be definitive.
- He also notes that even though some translations may not be literal, they still maintain the intent.

Conclusion:

Dr. Payton's session highlights the complexity of translation beyond merely substituting words from one language to another. He advocates for a nuanced understanding of speech acts, context, and cultural norms to ensure the intended meaning and effect of the Bible are conveyed accurately and naturally in any target language. He encourages a dynamic approach to translation that seeks to bridge the communication gaps between the original biblical authors and today's readers.

5. FAQs on Payton, Bible Translation, Session 7, Language, Part 2, Speech Acts, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ: Understanding Speech Acts in Bible Translation

1. **What are "speech acts" in the context of Bible translation, and why are they important?**
2. Speech acts refer to the way people use language to communicate not just information, but also to perform actions, like making requests, giving commands, or expressing intentions. Understanding speech acts is crucial in Bible translation because the meaning of a biblical passage is not just in the literal words, but also in the function they served within their original context. Translators need to capture both the explicit words and the underlying purpose or intent of those words to accurately convey the message. For example, what might look like a statement of fact in the source text could actually function as a request.
3. **How does the concept of "shared knowledge" affect our understanding of communication in the Bible?**
4. Shared knowledge refers to the common cultural background, language, history, and assumptions between a speaker and listener. Biblical authors and their audiences had a level of shared knowledge that we, as modern readers, often lack. This can lead to misinterpretations if we don't consider the underlying assumptions that inform their communication. For example, a seemingly simple statement might carry significant meaning based on shared cultural understanding that is not immediately apparent to those from a different background. This is why understanding the cultural norms and social context is vital for proper interpretation.

5. **Why is it important to analyze both explicit and implicit information in biblical texts?**
6. Communication involves both explicit (stated directly) and implicit (implied or unstated) information. The speaker often relies on the listener to infer the meaning from the context and shared knowledge. In the Bible, this means that often, the true intention or purpose of a statement is not always found in the words themselves, but must be deduced from the situation, the relationship between the speakers, and the broader cultural and historical context. A statement of fact might function as a polite request, or an indirect rebuke may take the form of a question. Failing to consider the implicit layers of communication can result in a misunderstanding the intended message.
7. **What is the difference between low-context and high-context communication, and how does this impact Bible translation?**
8. Low-context communication relies heavily on explicit verbal communication, where speakers spell out most of their ideas, assuming little shared knowledge between the speaker and listener. High-context communication, conversely, assumes significant shared knowledge, and therefore relies on subtle cues, implicit meanings, and less explicit verbal expression. Many Western cultures tend towards low-context communication, while cultures in the biblical world and many contemporary non-Western cultures are more high-context. This difference means translators must be cautious in not imposing a low-context understanding onto high-context texts, and they need to find ways to express high-context nuances appropriately in the target language.
9. **How can a translator ensure they are capturing not only the literal meaning but also the intended function of communication in the target language?**
10. Translators should analyze the source text and determine not just what was said, but why and to whom it was said. They should identify the type of utterance it is (statement, request, command, question), what kind of response is expected, and understand the social cues present. Then, they must find equivalent ways to communicate that function in the target culture. This could mean changing the grammatical structure, using different words, or even adjusting the tone. They need to prioritize conveying the original intended impact rather than adhering rigidly to the source language forms, thus ensuring the target audience will experience the text in a way that resonates with how it was originally intended.

11. How might cultural differences lead to misinterpretations of biblical passages, and what can be done to address this?

12. Cultural differences can cause misunderstandings of biblical texts because different cultures have different ways of communicating, understanding context, and using language for specific purposes. For example, an expression that's considered polite in one culture might come across as rude in another. Therefore, translators need to have a deep understanding of both the source culture and the target culture. This will help them ensure that they are communicating the intended message in a culturally appropriate way. This may require them to adapt how something is expressed or reframe the text so the intention of the original author is most accurately and clearly represented.

13. Why might a literal translation of the Bible not always be the most accurate, and what alternative approach should translators adopt?

14. A strictly literal translation often fails to capture the nuances of speech acts because it focuses solely on the surface level meaning of words, neglecting the context, implied meanings, and intended impact. The most accurate approach involves a dynamic or functional equivalence translation, which prioritizes conveying the meaning and intended effect of the original text. This means that the translator may need to use different words, grammar, or even adjust the tone, to achieve the same communicative effect in the target language, rather than sticking to a word-for-word translation which may obscure the true meaning.

15. What is the translator's goal when working between the source and target texts?

16. The translator's goal is to facilitate communication by transferring the meaning from the source language text into the target language text, taking care to preserve the original rhetorical function and intent. They are aiming for more than just conveying information; they are aiming for a target text that has the same persuasive power, the same emotional weight, and the same underlying force that the original would have had for its intended audience. The translation process is bi-directional, going back to the source text for meaning and then forward to how best to represent it in the target text, continually adjusting until the intended communicative impact is achieved.