

## **Payton, Bible Translation, Session 8, Languages, Part 3, Relevance Resources from Notebooklm**

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

### **1. Abstract of Payton, Bible Translation, Session 8, Languages, Part 3, Relevance, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

This lecture by Dr. George Payton on Bible translation focuses on effective communication across cultures and time periods. He uses examples illustrating how implied meanings and contextual understanding are crucial for interpreting utterances, particularly in the Bible. The lecture explores speech acts, highlighting the difference between what is said and what is meant, and emphasizes the importance of shared knowledge for successful communication. Payton argues that translations must be relevant to the target audience to ensure comprehension and engagement, suggesting that overly literal translations can hinder understanding. Ultimately, the lecture advocates for a translation approach that prioritizes conveying the author's intended meaning in a way that resonates with contemporary readers.

**2. 11-minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Payton, Session 8, Language, Part 3, Relevance – 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  
8.mp3**

### 3. Bible Translation: Session 8, Language, Part 3, Relevance

#### Language and Communication in Bible Translation: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What does Dr. Payton mean by a "performative" speech act, and can you give an example from the Bible?
2. Explain the difference between "implying" and "inferring" in the context of communication, as described in the lecture.
3. According to the lecture, what are some reasons a speaker might say something?
4. What is "skewing" as it relates to communication, and can you provide an example?
5. How does the example of the American young man in Japan illustrate the importance of shared cultural knowledge?
6. What does the example of Mrs. Brown and her daughter demonstrate about communication?
7. Why does Dr. Payton state that we should study speech acts?
8. What are the implications for Bible translators concerning the idea of relevance?
9. Why, according to Dr. Payton, might people stop listening to someone who is speaking?
10. How does the example of the young boy who asks his mother for the time demonstrate concepts about relevance in communication?

#### Answer Key

1. A performative speech act is when the act of speaking itself performs an action or brings about a state of being, like a pronouncement or a blessing. An example would be when Jacob's father pronounces a blessing on him, conveying a lasting inheritance, or when Jesus cursed the fig tree, causing it to wither.
2. "Implying" is what the speaker does when they suggest something without stating it directly, while "inferring" is what the listener does when they try to figure out what the speaker actually meant. Speakers give, listeners take. They are not synonymous.

3. A speaker might say something because they have a reason to communicate, they believe what they are saying is important or of value, and they seek to connect with the listener. They think they have something important to say and want to be understood.
4. "Skewing" occurs when there is a mismatch between what is said (the utterance) and what is intended (the meaning). An example given in the lecture is the statement "we're out of milk," which appears to be a statement of fact but is, in fact, a polite request to get more milk.
5. The example highlights that effective communication requires a shared understanding of cultural norms and expectations, even down to something like making eye contact. What seems polite in one culture (eye contact) can be considered offensive in another.
6. The example shows that a question may not always be a literal request for information, but can be an indirect way to convey a message. The daughter's question, "Can I watch TV?" prompts a prerequisite "Have you done your homework?" from the mother.
7. Dr. Payton states that studying speech acts provides a framework for interpreting utterances, which is critical in understanding the intended meaning and impact of what is being communicated. It is essential to understanding authorial intent.
8. Bible translators should consider whether the target audience will be able to understand both the explicit information and what's implied in the text and supply missing information if necessary. They must make the message relevant so people will engage with the text.
9. People may stop listening if it's too much effort to understand the message, if the topic doesn't seem relevant to them, or if the speaker is unclear. Listeners may also check out after they've gotten the point, before the speaker is done.
10. The young boy avoids asking his father for the time because he assumes the relevance is low and that doing so will lead to a long explanation he does not want to hear, even if it would provide him with more complete information. It speaks to the listener's experience and how much effort they will put in.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer each question using a clear thesis, supporting arguments, and examples from the source material.

1. Discuss the concept of "relevance" in communication, using examples from the lecture to explain how the failure to consider shared context and implicit meaning can lead to miscommunication, especially in Bible translation.
2. Analyze the different types of speech acts described by Dr. Payton, explaining how the speaker's intention can diverge from the literal words they use, and why it's vital for Bible translators to consider this phenomenon.
3. Explain how "high context" and "low context" communication styles influence the way messages are conveyed and interpreted, using examples from the lecture to support your claims, and discuss why this is relevant in Bible translation.
4. Evaluate the importance of understanding a speaker's underlying intentions when interpreting a message, and explore how Dr. Payton's lecture emphasizes the necessity of going beyond the surface level when analyzing communication, both in everyday conversation and in the Bible.
5. Considering the example of the young man in Japan and other examples of cultural barriers from the lecture, discuss how cultural understanding impacts communication, and consider ways translators can overcome those obstacles in order to communicate biblical truth with accuracy and impact.

## Glossary of Key Terms

**Cryptic:** Difficult to understand; having a hidden or ambiguous meaning.

**High Context Communication:** Communication style that relies heavily on shared knowledge, non-verbal cues, and context to convey meaning. Implied and indirect language is typical.

**Inferring:** The act of drawing a conclusion based on evidence or reasoning; what the listener does to understand the message.

**Implying:** The act of suggesting something without explicitly stating it; what the speaker does to convey the message.

**Linguophile:** A lover of language.

**Low Context Communication:** Communication style that relies heavily on explicit and direct language. Clear and literal communication is typical.

**Performative Speech Act:** An utterance that performs an action or creates a new state of being through the act of speaking itself (e.g., blessing, cursing, pronouncing a couple married).

**Relevance:** The degree to which something is connected or important to a particular matter, situation, or person; the need for the message to be pertinent to the listener.

**Rhetorical Question:** A question asked not for information but to make a point or create an effect.

**Shared Context:** The background information, knowledge, and experiences that are common between the speaker and the listener, which is vital for effective communication.

**Skewing:** A mismatch between what is said (the utterance) and what is meant (the intent); a lack of correspondence.

**Speech Act:** An utterance that performs a function in communication, such as stating, questioning, requesting, commanding, etc.

## 4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from Dr. George Payton's lecture on "How We Communicate in a Relevant Way," focusing on its implications for Bible translation:

### **Briefing Document: Dr. George Payton on Relevant Communication and Bible Translation**

**Date:** October 26, 2024 **Source:** Excerpts from "Payton BT\_EN\_Session08.pdf" (Dr. George Payton, Bible Translation, Session 8, Language, Part 3) **Subject:** Understanding and Applying Principles of Relevant Communication in Bible Translation

**Overview:** Dr. Payton's lecture explores the complexities of human communication, particularly the gap between what is said and what is meant. He argues that effective communication requires understanding not only the literal words used (utterance) but also the speaker's intent, the context, and the shared knowledge between the communicators. He then applies these principles to the crucial task of Bible translation, emphasizing the need to make the biblical text relevant and understandable to contemporary readers.

### **Key Themes and Concepts:**

#### **1. Language is Dynamic and Contextual:**

- Payton demonstrates the evolving nature of language with an anecdote about a campground notice translated for teenagers, highlighting the use of slang and abbreviations like "HMu," "sus," "cringe," and "TBH." He notes how language changes over time (e.g., "can't stop, won't stop" being more 90s/early 2000s).
- "Somehow texting has influenced the way that people write a lot of things, even sometimes papers and things like that."
- He emphasizes that language is not merely about words, but also about understanding shared context.

#### **1. Speech Acts:**

- **High vs. Low Context Communication:** High context communication involves minimal text due to shared understanding; low context uses maximal text when shared information is low.

- **Performative Speech Acts:** Some speech acts *do* something, like a pastor pronouncing a couple married or a blessing. Biblical examples include blessings and curses, where the act of speaking creates a reality. "When Jacob stole his birthright from his brother...Dad pronounced the blessing on Jacob...it's like he had given Jacob a physical thing...". This is less common in English, but vital to understand in the biblical context.
- **Matching vs. Mismatching Utterances:** Payton uses several examples to show how an utterance can be a statement, a request, or a command, and how they can be used straightforwardly, or not. A mismatch occurs when the intent and the utterance are skewed, like "we're out of milk" which means, "go buy more milk". He argues that we need to determine the true meaning before translating. He also uses the example of a mother asking her child, "What are you doing?" when he has cookies all over his face as a rebuke rather than a request for information.
- "The problem comes when there's a mismatch between what is said and what is meant, and we say that there's skewing between the intent and the utterance."

#### 1. **Communication as an Inferential Process:**

- Drawing on Brown, Payton explains that communication is largely inferential; speakers imply things, and listeners have to infer what is meant. He distinguishes between implying (giving) and inferring (taking) and shows that they are not synonymous.
- Contextual information is essential for understanding. He uses the example of the mother asking her daughter, "Have you finished your homework?" before letting her watch TV which is not a straight question, but a conditional statement. And he uses another example about the meaning behind the statements "What are you doing Friday night?" "I'm busy."

#### 1. **Relevance in Communication:**

- Speakers have a reason for saying something, believing it's important and valuable. Shared knowledge and assumptions often underpin communication. He tells the story of the man who loves the Cowboys, and how when he asks, "Will the Cowboys do better this year?" he is assuming shared knowledge about football. He says that understanding the context is important and a failure to understand can lead to misunderstandings, giving the example of the American man in Japan who was looking people in the eye, which is not the social norm there.

- He also points out that he was asked "what kind of music is on your playlist?" and that this question assumes a lot about his habits. It's important to figure out the real intent behind a question.
- Listeners assess the relevance of a message and decide how much effort to put into understanding it. If communication is too difficult or unclear, listeners will tune out. He references the story of a child who did not want the long explanation of the time from his father as an example. He mentions how this happens with sermon illustrations and wandering minds.
- "If you get what you need, you stop listening."

#### 1. **Relevance in Bible Translation:**

- The author of any biblical text has something important to say, which we assume they want to be understood. Therefore, translators need to figure out not only what the author said, but also the situation the author and audience were in and all of the shared context.
- "Our translation paradigm begins with the understanding that the author has something important that they want to say."
- Translators must consider whether their target audience will understand the explicit and implied information in the text. If not, it raises questions about whether or not implied information needs to be supplied.
- "Will the people who are receiving this translation be able to make sense of this text?"
- The goal is to make the Bible relevant to people's lives to encourage them to read it. If it's too hard, they will stop reading, he says, referencing the King James Version and literal translations as examples.
- "King James Version was probably the greatest book that was ever written...But today, if you try to read it, it's too hard...The same thing happens when people read a literal translation. It ends up being too hard...And so they do what? They stop reading it."
- Therefore, our translations need to be relevant. He asks, how do we help fill in the gaps between the biblical culture and the target culture and provide information that will be helpful to their understanding. This could include footnotes or other methods.



- "We keep this concept or this topic of relevance and the way that people talk in mind every step of the way as we translate."

#### **Implications for Bible Translation:**

- **Beyond Literal Translation:** Translators must go beyond literal word-for-word translation.
- **Understanding Cultural Context:** Translators need to understand the cultural context of the original text and the target audience.
- **Supplying Implied Information:** Translators should consider providing implied information through footnotes or other means to enhance understanding without altering the original text.
- **Relevance and Engagement:** The final translation should be relevant to the lives of contemporary readers, encouraging them to engage with the text.
- **Avoiding Obscurity:** Translation should avoid being too difficult and unclear, as this will discourage readers.

#### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Payton's lecture underscores the idea that effective communication depends on more than just words; it depends on shared context, implied meanings, and the speaker's intent. For Bible translation, this means that translators must strive not just for accuracy, but also for relevance, so that the biblical text can be understood and can engage its readers. His talk is designed to help translators to produce work that is not just a copy of words but an accurate message to a new culture.

This briefing document provides a summary of the main concepts in Dr. Payton's lecture. Further study is recommended for deeper understanding.

## 5. FAQs on Payton, Bible Translation, Session 8, Language, Part 3, Relevance, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ: Understanding Communication and Relevance in Bible Translation

- What is meant by "high context" and "low context" communication, and how does it relate to Bible translation?** High-context communication assumes a large amount of shared understanding and background knowledge between the speaker and the listener. This often results in less explicit verbal communication and more reliance on implicit cues. Low-context communication, conversely, assumes less shared knowledge, requiring more explicit and detailed verbal expression to convey a message. Biblical culture is typically high-context, as are many of the languages into which the Bible is being translated today. This means that translators must be sensitive to what is implied, not just what is explicitly stated, to accurately convey the original meaning to a new audience.
- What are "speech acts," and how can they impact interpretation?** Speech acts are utterances that perform an action. Examples of speech acts include statements, questions, commands, and requests, but also actions like blessings and cursings in the Bible. The key idea is that sometimes an utterance *does* something, it doesn't merely convey information. Problems arise when there's a mismatch between what is said (the utterance) and what is intended (the intent), leading to skewed communication and misinterpretation. Understanding the underlying intent of a speech act is crucial for accurately interpreting and translating text, especially when dealing with high-context cultures where the same utterance may have different meanings in different situations.
- How is communication an "inferential process," and why is this important?** Communication is largely inferential because speakers often imply meaning rather than stating it explicitly. Listeners then infer or deduce the intended meaning based on contextual cues, shared knowledge, and the situation. This is crucial because successful communication hinges on the listener's ability to grasp the speaker's implied message. Translators must be aware of this process because a literal translation that fails to account for implied information can lead to a lack of clarity or misinterpretation, causing the translated text to be irrelevant to the target audience.

- **Why is shared knowledge important for successful communication?** Shared knowledge, or common background information between a speaker and listener, is essential for successful communication because it allows people to convey complex ideas with fewer words. It forms the foundation on which messages are built. If a speaker assumes shared knowledge that does not exist in the mind of the listener (or reader), the message may be misunderstood or seem irrelevant. In translation, recognizing the differences in shared knowledge between the original biblical audience and modern readers is critical for ensuring the text makes sense and is perceived as relevant.
- **Why might an utterance be "skewed," and what does this mean?** An utterance is "skewed" when there's a disconnect between what is literally said and what is meant, leading to a gap between the intended message and the literal expression of that message. For example, a question like "Have you finished your homework?" may be more of a demand to complete the homework than a simple request for information. Recognizing these skewings is essential for translators to understand the original intent of a message, so that the translation appropriately conveys both the expressed and implied meanings to a new audience.
- **Why is relevance so crucial in translation, and what happens if a translation is not relevant?** Relevance, in the context of translation, refers to how well the translated text connects with the lives, experiences, and cultural understanding of the target audience. When a translation is not relevant, readers may find the text difficult to understand, they can't see how it applies to them, or they may simply disengage and stop reading it. A lack of relevance can stem from either explicit information that does not make sense to the reader, or due to the absence of implicit information needed to interpret the text properly. Therefore, it's crucial for translations to be both accurate and relatable to the audience for it to be effective.
- **How do translators address implied information in a text without changing its meaning?** Translators can address implied information that may be needed by the target audience without changing the core meaning of the text through various techniques. This could include providing background information in footnotes, using explanatory notes, rephrasing the text where appropriate, or including additional wording to make the implied meaning explicit. The goal is to help readers understand the text as it was intended in the original context, not to add to, or subtract from it, so it can still remain authoritative.

- **How does the translation paradigm view the original author of the text?** The translation paradigm assumes that the original author had a reason for writing and something important they wanted to convey to their audience. Translators operate under the assumption that the author intended to be understood, and thus employed language in a way they hoped would be clear to their intended audience. Therefore, the translation process should seek to uncover the author's purpose, message, and the way that message was communicated, and then attempt to make that purpose and message come across clearly in the translated text to a new audience.