

Payton, Bible Translation, Session 16, Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices Resources from Notebooklm

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

1. Abstract of Payton, Bible Translation, Session 16, Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. George Payton's lecture on Bible translation reviews challenges and best practices. **Key challenges** stem from the inherent ambiguity of language and cultural differences across time. **Effective translation**, therefore, requires accuracy, natural language, clarity, and cultural acceptability. **Best practices** include supplemental materials like footnotes, glossaries, and introductions, alongside broader scripture engagement materials such as songs, videos, and literacy classes, to overcome communication barriers and foster understanding. The overall aim is **impactful communication** that allows God's message to resonate deeply within the target community.

2. 14 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Payton, Session 16, Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices – Double click the 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_Session 1
6.mp3**

3. Bible Translation: Session 16, Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices

Bible Translation Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the key qualities of a good Bible translation?
2. Why is it important that a translation be acceptable to the target community?
3. What is a translation brief, and why is it useful in a translation project?
4. According to Payton, why is Bible translation so challenging?
5. How does shared knowledge impact communication and language?
6. What are some of the implications of literal translations of the Bible?
7. What is meant by "paratextual" information and what are some examples?
8. Why are book introductions considered a critical component of a Bible translation?
9. What does Payton suggest about the use of Scripture engagement materials?
10. What should be considered when deciding the timing of Scripture engagement material?

Answer Key

1. A good Bible translation should be accurate, communicating the original content of the biblical text. It should also be natural, using normal language for the target audience and understandable, ensuring effective communication of the text.
2. A translation needs to be acceptable because people are less likely to engage with or use it if they dislike its language, style, or overall approach. If people don't find the translation acceptable it may sit unused on shelves.
3. A translation brief is a document created at the beginning of a translation project that outlines the specific expectations, target audience, translators involved, and overall goals of the project. It helps ensure a mutual understanding among the team and that the final product is well-suited for the intended audience.

4. Bible translation is challenging because human communication is often cryptic and under-specified; biblical authors and their audiences shared knowledge and cultural contexts that today's readers may not possess. Thus, much information is left implied in the biblical text.
5. Shared knowledge, which includes shared culture, worldview, and language conventions, allows people to communicate concisely and assume that others can fill in the gaps. This is also what leads to languages changing over time.
6. Literal translations, while attempting to retain the original words of the text, often retain gaps in communication because they do not fill in assumed context or implied meaning. They can sometimes result in a text that is neither understandable nor natural in the target language.
7. Paratextual information refers to supplementary materials placed outside of the biblical text. Examples include footnotes, glossaries, book introductions, cross-references, and section headings which are all meant to provide context and further explanation.
8. Book introductions are critical because they provide a frame of reference for readers, outlining who wrote the book, when, and why, and help to prepare them for what is coming up in the text. Book introductions can do the heavy lifting of orienting readers.
9. Scripture engagement materials, like Bible stories for children, music, videos, dramas, and artwork, can draw people into the biblical narrative. They can help a person engage with, understand, and benefit from the Scriptures, regardless of their reading level or cultural background.
10. The timing of Scripture engagement materials is not fixed, however it must be intentionally planned. In some cases they might be used before the translation starts to generate interest and awareness, and in other cases, they may be used to supplement existing translations.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Answer each question in essay format.

1. Discuss the interplay between accuracy, naturalness, and acceptability in Bible translation. How does a translator balance these elements to create an effective translation?

2. Explain how cultural differences and the lack of shared knowledge between the biblical authors and modern readers impact the translation process. What role does understanding worldview play in producing a better translation?
3. Analyze the importance of both paratextual information and scriptural engagement materials in the Bible translation process. How do they address the limitations of the biblical text itself?
4. Considering the variety of scriptural engagement materials discussed, what factors should a translation team consider when choosing what methods to use for their specific target audience?
5. Explore the concept of intentionality in Bible translation. How can translators ensure that they are not only producing a translation, but also fostering deep and meaningful engagement with the text?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Acceptability:** The quality of a translation being appealing and suitable to the target community's language preferences, style, and expectations.
- **Accuracy:** The fidelity of a translation to the content and meaning of the original biblical text.
- **Book Introductions:** Paratextual material at the beginning of a biblical book that provides background information on authorship, context, and purpose.
- **Cross-References:** Paratextual notes that direct the reader to other verses within the Bible that relate to a particular passage.
- **Cryptic:** Characterized by language that is condensed, under-specified, and relies on the receiver to fill in gaps based on shared knowledge.
- **Economy of language:** A way of communicating concisely, omitting details that can be understood from shared knowledge.
- **Form-based Translation:** A translation philosophy that emphasizes retaining the grammatical and structural features of the source language.
- **Glossary:** Paratextual material, usually in the back of a book, containing an alphabetized list of terms and their definitions, especially those specific to the text.

- **Impactful:** The quality of a translation that is engaging, draws people in, and communicates in a powerful way.
- **Literal Translation:** A translation method that seeks to represent each word and grammatical structure of the source language in the target language, even if it results in unnatural or unclear language.
- **Natural Language:** The way in which people typically communicate in the target language, using common and easily understood phrases and expressions.
- **Paratextual Information:** Supplemental material outside the main text of the Bible, such as footnotes, glossaries, and book introductions, that aids in understanding.
- **Scripture Engagement Material:** Supplementary material outside the Bible that helps people engage with the biblical text, like music, videos, and Bible studies.
- **Section Headings:** Paratextual headings that break up the text into sections and provide a summary or preview of what is coming.
- **Shared knowledge:** The mutual understanding of a culture, history, language conventions, and context that allows communicators to make assumptions and not have to spell everything out.
- **Target Audience:** The specific group of people for whom a translation is intended, whose culture, language, and expectations must be taken into account.
- **Translation Brief:** A document that outlines the specific goals, expectations, methods, and target audience of a Bible translation project.
- **Worldview:** A person's or culture's fundamental beliefs and assumptions about reality, which influence how they interpret and understand the world.

4. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided source, "Payton_BT__EN_Session16.pdf":

Briefing Document: Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices

Source: Excerpts from "Payton_BT__EN_Session16.pdf", Dr. George Payton, Bible Translation, Session 16.

Date: October 26, 2023

Introduction:

This document summarizes a lecture by Dr. George Payton on Bible translation issues and best practices. The lecture reviews concepts discussed in previous sessions and connects them with future discussions. The overarching theme is that effective Bible translation is not merely about word-for-word equivalence, but about ensuring the message is accurately, naturally, clearly, and impactfully received by the target audience.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. Qualities of a Good Translation:

- **Accuracy:** The translation must faithfully communicate the content of the original biblical text. As Dr. Payton states, "It has to communicate the content of the biblical text, and that is first and foremost in our thinking."
- **Natural Language:** It must use normal and natural language in the target language. Accuracy should be balanced with understandability.
- **Understandability:** If the translation isn't understood, the translation effort is deemed unsuccessful. "If it's not understood, have we then translated?"
- **Acceptability:** The translation must be acceptable to the community, including its style and tone. A translation that isn't accepted and used is not effective. Dr. Payton references a case in Tanzania where a disliked translation went unused.
- **Impactful:** The translation should draw people in and communicate in a powerful way. It should be a "beautiful product, but an impactful product."
- **Meeting Expectations:** The translation style should align with the expectations of the target audience, which might be a more formal style in some cultures (e.g., Asia, Muslim, and Hindu contexts).

- These qualities are not only goals but also standards of measurement during and after translation. "They're ideals. That's what a good quality translation is. They're our goal. But then, in addition to the goal, it's our standard of measurement."

1. **The Translation Brief:**

- A "translation brief" is a crucial document created at the beginning of a translation project that outlines the specifics of how the translation will be done, including the target audience, translators involved, and expected style.
- This document helps to ensure that all parties have a mutual understanding and that the final translation meets the needs and expectations of the community. "A translation brief is simply a document that says, this is how we're going to translate it, this is who the target audience is, this is who the people are that will be translating it, and this is what we're expecting."

1. **Challenges in Bible Translation (Cryptic Nature of Language):**

- Human communication is "cryptic" and "under-specified." People often leave out a lot of information, assuming shared knowledge allows listeners to fill in the gaps.
- Shared knowledge is essential for language to function efficiently. This shared knowledge can be:
 - **Situational:** Specific to a context or a conversation.
 - **Shared language usage:** Conventions that are commonly understood.
 - **Cultural:** Shared values and expectations from a familiar setting.
 - **Worldview:** Deeply ingrained views of the world and its values.
 - **Encyclopedic knowledge:** A broad understanding of various topics.
- Because those in the original biblical times shared different knowledge, language, culture, and worldview, it is a challenge for modern readers to fill in the gaps of the Bible's communications. "The people in the Bible had all those things that they shared in common. We are not one of those people from the Bible, so we do not share all that information."
- Literal translations often retain these gaps, resulting in texts that are hard to understand or unnatural, sometimes even leading to wrong interpretations.

"Literal translations often retain those gaps, and this results in a text that may not be understood or may not be natural."

1. **Filling the Gaps: Overcoming Barriers to Communication:**

- Effective Bible translation seeks to fill in the gaps of communication within the biblical text and remove barriers to understanding, enabling people to engage with and benefit from the scriptures. "To achieve effective communication of the biblical message, we strive to fill in the gaps in the communication in the biblical text...we're trying to remove all of the hindrances or the barriers to communication as much as we can."
- Dr. Payton emphasizes that Bible translation is a human communication tool.
- History proves it is possible to overcome many translation challenges, with the Septuagint as a prime example (Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament).

1. **Best Practices - Supplying Information Outside the Text (Paratextual):**

- When it is not possible to fully explain and fill gaps in the text, paratextual elements are needed to help explain the meaning of the Bible:
- **Footnotes:** Explanations of difficult phrases or concepts. Footnotes are crucial to supplement literal translations to help clarify the gaps. "If you have a literal translation with no explanation, there will be gaps all over the place."
- **Glossaries:** Definitions of terms, places, and people found in the Bible.
- **Book Introductions:** Provide context for the book, including its time of writing, authorship, circumstances, and purpose. Book introductions are important for establishing a framework for understanding what one is reading. Dr. Payton shares an example of the Book of Micah.
- **Cross-References:** Help readers connect related passages, aiding understanding and allowing comparison between texts.
- **Section Headings:** Should be communicative and prepare the reader for the content ahead.
- **Pictures:** Visual aids such as pictures of biblical items, people, and places.
- **Maps:** Provide geographical context.

1. Scripture Engagement Materials (Supplemental Materials):

- These materials are produced *outside* the Bible to inform and engage people with the scriptures. Dr. Payton says, "These are supplemental material outside the Bible, things you don't put within the cover of the New Testament or the whole Bible that help to inform people about the Bible and engage people about the Bible."
- **Booklets:** Bible stories for children and easy-reading materials.
- **Music/Songs:** Biblical themes set to music.
- **Audio Files:** The Bible, podcasts, or radio pieces in the local language.
- **Videos:** The Jesus Film and other visual content.
- **Drama:** Live performances depicting biblical scenes.
- **Dance:** Often combined with music and drama.
- **Artwork:** Pictorial representations of biblical stories, like what Michelangelo did in the Sistine Chapel.
- **Literacy Classes:** Enable people to read the scriptures.
- **Bible Studies:** Written materials for group study and discussion.
- **Listening Groups:** Popular in pre-literate societies, allowing group discussion around audio recordings.
- **Books on Bible Culture:** Explained the significance of biblical objects, places, and customs.
- These materials should be tailored to particular sub-groups or target audiences within a culture (adults, children, Christians, non-believers, etc.)
- These are crucial to engage with the Scriptures, especially in unreached people groups. "Every culture, including ours, needs Scripture engagement materials in order to effectively engage with the biblical content, especially people who have not reached yet, especially unreached people groups."

1. Integration of Scripture Engagement in Bible Translation Projects:

- Scripture engagement should be an intentional and integrated part of the overall translation project, not an afterthought. "It has to be intentional, and it has to be carried out."

- The timing of producing scripture engagement materials can vary, sometimes starting even before translation work, depending on the needs of the community. Dr. Payton shares an example of the SAL team using a song about Jesus to spark interest and engagement in Asia.
- It's not just about getting the text translated, but making it possible for God to speak directly to the people and impact their lives. "Not only effective communication in the target language but also making it possible for God to speak directly to the people in a meaningful way, in a way that's impactful, in a way that draws them in so that their lives can change and so that they can then have a deeper, more intimate relationship with God."
- The biblical text, paratext, and Scripture engagement materials all work together to facilitate a full and complete understanding of the scriptures.

Conclusion:

Dr. Payton's lecture underscores that effective Bible translation is a complex process that requires careful consideration of language, culture, and the needs of the target audience. A good translation balances accuracy with understandability, acceptability, and impact. In addition to well-translated text, paratextual elements and diverse Scripture engagement materials are essential tools to bridge communication gaps and facilitate meaningful engagement with God's Word. Intentionality is crucial to produce these components and ultimately create an environment for effective communication of the Bible.

5. FAQs on Payton, Bible Translation, Session 16, Review of Translation Issues and Best Practices, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Bible Translation: Challenges and Best Practices

- **Why is accurate translation of the Bible so challenging?** The difficulty in Bible translation arises from the fact that human communication is often under-specified, relying on shared knowledge that may not exist between the original biblical audience and modern readers. The Bible was written within specific cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts that are foreign to us, leading to potential misunderstandings if the text is translated too literally. Translators must fill in these "gaps" to ensure clarity. Furthermore, languages have different structures, idioms, and cultural references, requiring careful adaptation during translation.
- **What qualities define a good Bible translation?** A good Bible translation should be accurate, meaning that it conveys the correct content of the biblical text. It should also use natural, understandable language that is appropriate for the target audience. The translation should be acceptable to the community it is intended for, aligning with their expectations for style and language. Finally, it should be impactful, engaging readers and facilitating a deeper understanding and connection with the text.
- **What is a "translation brief" and why is it important?** A translation brief is a document that outlines the expectations and parameters for a translation project. It specifies the target audience, the desired translation style (e.g., formal or informal), who will be translating the text, and other relevant factors. It is vital because it ensures all parties involved have a shared understanding of the project's goals, avoiding potential conflicts later and ensuring the final translation is accepted by its intended audience.
- **How does "shared knowledge" impact the process of translation?** Shared knowledge, which includes cultural values, common worldviews, and specific situational awareness, allows people to communicate concisely, assuming the listener or reader can fill in the implicit details. However, translators cannot assume this shared knowledge exists when translating ancient texts for modern audiences. Therefore, they must bridge the knowledge gap by adding implicit information or providing context to the biblical text.

- **What are "paratextual" materials, and why are they necessary in Bible translation?** Paratextual materials are supplemental aids added to the Bible, but not within the text itself. These include footnotes, glossaries, book introductions, cross-references, section headings, maps, and pictures. They are essential to bridge cultural and historical gaps, explain difficult concepts, and provide context that enhances understanding. For example, a footnote can explain a cultural idiom or a glossary can define unfamiliar terms. These resources help the reader by making the text more accessible.
- **Besides paratextual materials, what are "scriptural engagement materials," and why are they important?** Scriptural engagement materials are resources created outside of the Bible itself to promote interaction with and understanding of its content. They include resources like booklets, Bible stories for children, music, audio recordings, videos, dramas, artwork, literacy programs, and Bible study materials. These materials cater to diverse learning styles and audiences and are important because they can increase interest in the Bible, particularly in areas where it is new, or among those who are not literate. These resources make the Bible more accessible and engaging in different contexts and formats.
- **When should Scripture engagement materials be produced during a translation project?** There is no set time to produce these materials, and sometimes it is done before the translation starts. While traditionally, the focus was on completing the translation first, now there is a growing understanding that these supplemental resources should be included throughout the project. The timing can vary depending on the target audience and their needs. Ideally, the materials should be available alongside the translated text to enhance comprehension and engagement from the start.
- **What is the ultimate goal of Bible translation, beyond simple communication?** The goal of Bible translation goes beyond accurately converting words between languages. The overarching aim is to enable God to speak directly to people in a meaningful way, to make it possible for them to engage with the Scriptures personally, and for their lives to be transformed by understanding God's message, ultimately leading to a deeper relationship with Him. By providing translations that are not only accurate but also understandable, natural, and engaging, translators empower individuals to engage with the text.