A Direct Translation of the Bible as Ancient Text: Only a New Name for a Stilted Word-for-Word Translation? [1]

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Introduction

Prof Wolfgang Richter instilled in me the passion to constantly seek for a theoretical framework for understanding the text and language of the Old Testament that could be justified best in terms of what we know about language. For the last 15 years, I have been deeply involved in a new translation of the Bible in Afrikaans of which the skopos is a "direct translation". This skopos represents my own search for a model of translation that both addresses a specific need of churches that use the Bible in Afrikaans and that could also be justified in terms of what we understand of the complexities of language and the translation of an ancient sacral text. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that the term "direct translation" as it is used by the Bible Society of South Africa (=BSSA) is not merely a new label for a stilted word-for-word translation, but a technical term having a very specific meaning within an academically justifiable translation model that was formulated for the new Bible in Afrikaans. It will also try to show that, although attempts to translate ancient texts "directly" pursue an almost impossible ideal, direct translation nevertheless proposes a solution for the vexing problems that translators may come up against. What is more, the challenges posed by attempts at direct translation may serve as catalysts for new research on understanding ancient texts.

The article is structured as follows: It begins with an overview of the translation of the Bible in Afrikaans. This will include a demonstration that, on the one hand, a direct translation builds on the theoretical foundation of Eugene Nida's work, while on the other hand, it involves a fundamental reconsideration of the communication theory that forms the basis of a dynamic equivalent Bible translation. The article provides reasons why this particular term ("direct translation"), which can be misconstrued so easily, was chosen for the project's skopos. After

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[1]   This contribution is a revision and translated version of VAN DER MERWE 2014b.

formulating the theoretical points of departure of this translation, the value and especially the challenges of a direct translation will be indicated with reference to a number of examples from Judges 6–8. In the light of these challenges, the article will conclude by indicating briefly how this kind of translation offers new horizons for research on understanding and translating ancient texts.

Afrikaans translations[2]

The first complete and official Bible in Afrikaans was published in 1933. This concordant translation was revised in 1953. Since the 1960s, however, serious questions have arisen about the idea that the only way to remain faithful to the source text would be to translate it word for word as far as possible. With regard to Bible translation, a pioneer in addressing this challenge was Eugene Nida. He argued that a Bible translation had to convey the biblical message (STINE 2004, 38) and that people communicated, not by means of words, but rather through the meaning of sentences and texts in their cultural context.

Nida's passion for Bible translations that communicated with contemporary readers and that were based on "scientific" principles captured the imagination of translation agencies worldwide (CARSON 1993, 38–41). The vast majority of Bibles that appeared in various languages during the second half of the 20th century were dynamic-equivalent translations. This was the background to the publication of the 1983 translation of the Bible in Afrikaans.

In the initial enthusiasm about Bible translations that "talked" to contemporary people, two very important aspects were often overlooked. First, Nida's initiatives were driven mainly by a vision to prepare Bibles for the mission field (STINE 2004, 27–54). The needs of existing churches were not the most important consideration. Second, Nida's translation model was based on a communication theory and a view of language and meaning that prevailed in his time. According to the communication model that was current then, what could be said in any language A could also be said in language B. For this purpose, the codes of language A had to be broken down into kernel clauses that expressed the content communicated in language A. The content then had to be recoded according to

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[2]   Only Afrikaans Bible translations that were prepared by a Bible society at the request of churches are discussed in this section.

the codes of language B. This code model assumed that linguistic symbols were containers in which the full content of a language was packaged and that the content could be deciphered and repacked by means of the translation process.[3] However, linguistic symbols typically are contextualised by the entire conceptual world of speakers and their communities, and Nida's model of communication did not take this fundamental fact into account.

Although Nida is regarded as the father of modern Bible translation theory, criticism of his approach began to grow from various sources in the 1990s.[4] In translation studies, the emphasis shifted from attempts such as Nida's – i.e. to instruct translators how to attain equivalence between the source and target language at word, sentence and text level – towards descriptive research on all the processes that are typically involved in translation projects, as well as the norms and considerations that play a role in individual projects.[5] These can range from general cognitive, sociocultural, organisational, situation-specific and textual frameworks to specific lexical frameworks involved in the process.[6] In particular, insight was gained into determining the "normative" role of the expected *function* that a specific translation had to perform according to those who had commissioned it. This kind of empirical information on the complexities of translation made it increasingly clear that Nida's translation model was not really a translation theory, but rather an attempt to provide guidelines for the practice of Bible translation based on past insights into communication and translation and on abundant experience at the grassroots level.[7] Developments in translation studies, as well as new insights into how the meaning of words works,[8] required a more sophisticated and comprehensive model of translation than Nida's.[9]

Linguists, for example, increasingly became aware that human language shows all the typical characteristics of a complex system that is completely embedded in the culture, philosophy of life and world view of

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[3]   See NIDA AND TABER 1969.
[4]   See GENTZLER 2002, 44–65. Not all the criticism was always justified; see STATHAM 1997, 31–38.
[5]   See SNELL-HORNBY 2006, 47–67.
[6]   See WENDLAND AND WILT 2008, 6.
[7]   See PATTEMORE 2007, 21–63.
[8]   For a brief overview of the most recent developments in lexical semantics, in particular cognitive semantics, see GEERAERTS 2010, 182–287.
[9]   For an overview of developments in translation studies since 1970, see NAUDÉ 2002.

a speech community, as well as its individual speakers.[10] The meaning of words – specifically how meaning develops and functions in certain contexts – often cannot be "recoded" from one language to another merely by means of a translation equivalent.

The above reality is one reason why Nida's code model of communication had to be replaced with an inferential model of communication, according to GUTT 2000, 22–55. According to an inferential model, Bible translation should be regarded as a complex form of secondary communication, which implies that, unless the cognitive world of the modern-day reader is broadened to bring it closer to that of the people of the Biblical world, any Bible translation can be misconstrued very easily.

When the Church Advisory Committee for the Bible in Afrikaans, which serves as a forum for all churches that use the Bible in Afrikaans, approached the Bible Society of South Africa (=BSSA) in the 1990s with a request for an Afrikaans translation of the Bible that was closer to the source text, the BSSA was confronted with a dilemma. In the light of developments in modern linguistics and translation studies, the translative points of departure of the 1933/1953 as well as the 1983 translations could no longer be justified.[11] Furthermore, most translation agencies throughout the world had concentrated on preparing dynamic-equivalent translations during the preceding three decades. The theoretical foundation for a comprehensible "church Bible" that adhered as closely as possible to the source text had received little attention. The BSSA convened a symposium in Kempton Park in August 2001. The purpose of the symposium was to take stock of all developments that could be relevant in the preparation of a new Bible translation.[12] On the strength of the insights gained from this symposium, the Church Advisory Committee launched an initiative to develop a thoroughly academically justifiable model for the kind of Bible that the churches would like to have. Further particulars of the negotiation process to determine whether churches indeed wanted a direct translation are provided in VAN DER MERWE 2012.

The first pillar of the new framework was the insights of the German translation studies scholar Christiane Nord. Nord considers the starting point of any translation project to be the primary function that the trans-

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[10]   See MUNNÉ 2013, 175–196.
[11]   See VAN DER MERWE 1999, 293–306.
[12]   See NAUDÉ AND VAN DER MERWE 2002.

lation should perform according to the commissioner thereof.[13] A variety of functions can be distinguished, which can be divided broadly into instrumental and documentary translations. A typical example of instrumental translations is advertisements, where the source text may be completely subordinate to the function of the translation. The most important question in these cases would be whether the advertisement serves its purpose; that is, whether the advertisement "works". In documentary translations, on the other hand, the source text plays a key role; for example, when the constitution of a country or religious texts, such as the Bible, are translated.

NORD 2001 argues that, in documentary translations, professional translators should go about their work with a multi-faceted loyalty: loyalty to the commissioner of the translation (and by implication the target language reader) as well as loyalty to the author of the source text. In practice, this means that the translator has to carry out the instructions of the commissioner and meet his/her expectations. Furthermore, because the translator possesses professional knowledge about the complexity of translation as well as the source text, the translator must spell out the full implications of the commissioner's expectations to him or her, especially during the preceding negotiation process. Strategies must also be negotiated to ensure that the translation meets the commissioner's expectations while remaining loyal to the author of the source text.

In the case of religious texts, church traditions and translations that readers are accustomed to (readers' "subjective theories" according to NORD 2001, 187–193) also play a very important role. Even traditional translation choices that, technically considered, are not academically justifiable must be handled with great circumspection. If, for instance, the translation has to keep closer to the source text, the name of "the Lord" is actually Yahweh. However, a new church Bible that "changes" the name of "the Lord" would probably be unacceptable to most churches.

The value of Nord's model lies in its attempt to consider all the factors that play a role in the practice of translation. All the knowledge, skills, tasks and procedures required for a specific translation project can be spelt out with reference to these considerations. Nonetheless, the function of the translation according to the commissioner thereof is always the focal point of this process. This function must be negotiated thoroughly in advance and then spelt out in the form of a translation brief and its skopos, which

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[13]   See NORD 1997.

will serve as a contract for the particular translation task. Translators make translation decisions in accordance with the translation brief and skopos, whereupon the commissioner will also evaluate the translation in the light of the brief and skopos.

The negotiated translation brief for the new Bible in Afrikaans reads: "Create a clearly understandable, source-text-oriented Afrikaans translation of the Bible that is suitable for reading and use in church services as well as catechism, Bible study and personal use." The skopos of the translation is that it should be a *direct translation*.[14]

Why is the skopos a direct translation?

Ernst-August Gutt undertook his PhD research under Deirdre Wilson at University College in London. Wilson and Dan Sperber were the founders of the relevance theory,[15] which is an inferential communication theory.[16] According to this communication model, more factors are involved in the coding and decoding of linguistic symbols than the codes used by the speaker and the hearer, as the code model that Nida used would imply. The conceptual worlds of the speaker and the hearer also play a fundamental role. In a typical communication process, the speakers formulate their utterances by means of expressions as well as the conceptual world that their expressions presuppose, based on their assumptions about the codes and the conceptual world of their presumed audience.

Against this background, GUTT 2000 claims that Bible translation is a very difficult form of secondary communication – "very difficult" because of the immense distance in time and space between the present setting on the one hand and the source text and culture of the past on the other hand; "secondary" because the translator, as a third party, has to reconstruct what the authors of the ancient texts wanted to say to their audience.

Unlike Nida, Gutt does not attempt to instruct how Bible translators should go about their task. Instead, his goal is to characterise and explain the realities of Bible translation as a communication process with reference to the inferential model of communication. GUTT 2000, 200 puts it

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14   Also see HTTP://WWW.NUWEKERKBYBEL.CO.ZA.
15   See SPERBER AND WILSON 1986.
16   The inferential model of communication is not without shortcomings. See SCHIFFRIN'S 1994, 391–405 critical comparison of the code, inferential and interactive models of communication. The value that the inferential model and relevance theory do hold for Bible translation is supported by empirical research that HILL 2006 reports on.

this way: "The account of translation given here is neither descriptive nor prescriptive in its thrust, but explanatory ... It rather tries to understand what causal interdependencies are at work in translation, and hence to bring out what its conditions for success are."

According to Gutt, Bible translators typically attempt to "resemble" the communicative clues that authors use in the source text "interpretatively". This can be done with reference to the conceptual world of either the contemporary readers of the intended translation (so-called indirect translation) or the first hearers or readers of the source text (so-called direct translation).

Gutt uses the terms *direct* and *indirect translation* by analogy with the terms or concepts *direct* and *indirect speech*. Suppose a grandfather attended a fun run with his family (and grandchildren) and the organiser made an announcement that he could hear clearly. If his grandson would ask, "What is the gentleman saying?" he would probably answer, "He says that ..." Following the word *that*, he would try to formulate the announcement in language that he believed to be understandable to the child. If his wife would ask him the same question, such adjustment would typically be unnecessary. He could quote the speaker directly, answering: He says: "..." In the same way, direct translators of the Bible attempt to quote Ruth (for example) directly in Afrikaans as she would have spoken in those days. The fundamental difference between a direct and an indirect translation is that, in the case of the direct approach, the translated text itself does not need to fit in with the conceptual world of the modern-day reader. The challenge, however, is that the conceptual world of the text must be reconstructed, and this reconstruction often can be extremely provisional. A translator must also establish where and how the conceptual world of readers from the church that has commissioned the translation should be broadened; for instance, by means of introductions to the different Bible books, footnotes, marginal notes, maps, cross-references and a glossary. Establing the extent and content of these paratexts in a principled way is a challenge in itself.

Just like Nida's ideal that a dynamic-equivalent translation should have the same effect on the modern-day reader that the source text had on the first readers, the creation of a direct translation is at best a laudable ideal to pursue. It serves as a heuristic framework that guides the decision-making process when addressing the complex variety of considerations that need to be addressed in the translation process.

According to GUTT 2000, 132–136, the "communicative clues" from the source text are key in the complex process of Bible translation. Communicative clues are, in the words of HATIM 2013, 112, "features built into the text for the purpose of guiding the audience to the intended interpretation. They are textual features which vary in degree of subtlety and which are perceived to be particularly significant for the intended meaning." GUTT 2000, 136–167 distinguishes the following communicative clues:

1. Clues indicated by the semantic content of utterances; as GUTT 2000, 136 puts it: "communicating clues arising from semantic representations," for example, the customs of politeness associated with the Biblical Hebrew lexeme גֵּר ("sojourner")
2. Clues indicated by the syntactic properties of a particular utterance, for example, the use of "marked" word order
3. Clues indicated by discourse markers, for example, "well"
4. Clues indicated by the phonetic properties of an utterance, for example, onomatopoeia[17]
5. Clues indicated by the use of fixed expressions, for example, ways of greeting and idioms
6. Clues indicated by the sound-based properties of poetic language, for example, assonance, alliteration and rhyme.

In a direct translation, therefore, translators attempt to reproduce all these communicative clues in the target language according to reconstructed assumptions about the conceptual world of the source text speakers and hearers.

Some examples of the implications of the skopos as "a direct translation"

In this article I consider only the first and third communicative clues listed above.

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[17] It is unclear why GUTT 2000, 150–151 and 159 distinguishes between communicative clues that arise from the phonetic characteristics of expressions and onomatopoeia (imitation of sound). Like HATIM 2013:114, I believe that the same kind of communicative clue arises from the phonetic characteristics of expressions.

1 The semantic potential of an utterance

The term יָד, which is typically translated as "hand" in Afrikaans, occurs 26 times in Judges 6–8. According to KOEHLER AND BAUMGARTNER 1999, 386–387, the term refers to one's forearm or hand. יָד occurs 1 662 times in the Hebrew Bible and can also refer to an animal's paw or a man's penis. However, it is typically used more figuratively, in constructions such as "to be/let in someone's power or care". In Judges 6–8 יָד is a key word, according to GROSS 2009, 434, because the nonfigurative use is strongly profiled; for example "the staff in the hand of the angel" (Judg. 6:21), "to lick/scoop with the hand to the mouth" (Judg. 7:6) and "took provisions and rams' horns in their hand" (Judg. 7:8). The figurative use, according to which "to be in the hand" refers unambiguously "to be in the power", occurs with equal frequency in Judges 6–8; for example, "to give Midian in the hand of Gideon" (Judg. 7:2,7 and 14), "to save Israel through the hand of Gideon" (Judg. 6:36 and 37) and "Gideon's hand became strong" (Judg. 7:11).

Against this background it is worth noting that in Judges 6:13 the Hebrew term כַּף (palm of the hand) is used instead of יָד. Gideon says to the Lord, "But now the Lord has given us ... in the palm of the Midianiets." The Lord answers him, "Go … and rescue Israel out of the palm of the Midianites."

It is obvious that this lexically more specific item is used here with a reason. By his choice of words Gideon wishes to slightly increase the appeal value of his question to God by essentially asking, "How is it possible that we are so in the hollow of the hand of the Midianites?" – in other words, so totally at their mercy.

A study of how translators have dealt with this example before shows that most translations at the more literal end of the spectrum "formal – functionally equivalent" translate כַּף as hand; for example, the 1953 AFRIKAANSE BYBEL, the NRSV, the ESV, the ELBERFELDER translation, the NJPS and the NIV. Consequently, no difference can be detected between Judges 6:13–14 and Judges 6:1, where יָד is used instead of כַּף ("die Here het hulle oorgegee in die hand van die Midianiete" ["The Lord delivered them into the hand of the Midianites"]). Many translations at the functionally equivalent end of the spectrum handle this in the same way as the 1983 AFRIKAANSE BYBEL: "Hy het ons oorgegee in die mag van die Midianiete" ["He delivered us into the power of the Midianites"].

In a direct translation, the first question would be whether the communicative clue offered by the words meaning "hand" and "palm of the hand" in Judges 6–8 can be retained in the target language. If "delivered into the hand of x", with "x" referring to someone in a position of authority, is an acceptable idiomatic expression in the target language, "hand" should be retained. In Afrikaans, this is indeed the case. The expression "delivered into the palm of the hand of x", however, is problematic. "Delivered into the hollow of the hand of x" could possibly be considered. If the target language does not allow a translation of that kind, a footnote has to be inserted to explain that the Hebrew text uses a specific term for a particular part of the hand. This principle is even more applicable in the case of יָד. It ensures that the translation does justice to the cohesive effect of a communicative clue, namely the unusually frequent occurrence of the term hand in the narrative of Gideon in Judges 6–8.

While the 1953 AFRIKAANSE BYBEL renders the word כַּף in Judges 6:13–4 as hand, there was no alternative but to render it as palm of the hand in Judges 8:6: "Maar die vorste van Sukkot vra: Is die handpalm van Seba en van Sálmuna nou al in u hand, dat …?" ["But the officials of Succoth asked: Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand that …?"]. However, this is an example of a forced literal translation of the source text that sounds almost nonsensical unless, first, the modern-day reader is offered insight into the conceptual world of the source text and, second, the translators have an advanced semantic theory at their disposal. According to MATTHEWS, CHAVALAS AND WALTON 2000, this expression should be understood against the following background: "It was a common practice for a hand to be cut off each dead enemy so that a count of the casualties inflicted could be made. Egyptian monuments from this period depict piles of hands gathered after battle."

However, in this particular construction, palm of the hand also stands metonymically for hand, as is the case elsewhere where a כַּף is chopped off (e.g. Deut. 25:12). Translating it here with palm of the hand would be a translation error. The ESV translates Judges 8:6 as follows: "Are the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand, that …?" The ELBERFELDER translation solves this problem as follows: "Ist etwa die Faust Sebachs und Zalmunnas schon in deiner Hand?" The NRSV and NIV translate it "Do you already have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your possession?" How many modern readers would be able to infer the relevant cultural

information from this expression is an open question. A direct translation of this sentence could read like this: "Het jy al Seba en Sálmuna se hande in jou hand?" ["Do you have the hands of Zebah and Zalmunna in your hand?"] The custom of sometimes chopping off the hands of defeated enemies would have to be explained in a footnote as background information.

2 Discourse markers

The study of discourse markers has received a considerable amount of attention in the past three decades. What falls under the superordinate "discourse markers" and how they can be analysed and described has given rise to heated debate. A recent publication that raises this issue describes no less than 22 different approaches to as well as definitions of discourse markers[18]. GUTT 2000, 151–55 describes discourse markers as "pragmatic connectives" – essentially, they give users an indication of the relevance of one utterance in relation to another; or, put differently, of the semantic limitation that utterance B (introduced by discourse marker x) places on utterance A.

ONODERA 2011, 615 offers the following definition: "A discourse marker signals the speaker's view/attitude/judgement with respect to the relationship between the chunks of discourse that precede and follow it, typically in the initial position of the sentence (utterance)." According to MOSEGAARD-HANSEN 2006, 26, these chunks of information can be the content of specific utterances, but they can also be any other relevant information that forms part of the present discourse.

Of all the communicative clues, discourse markers are probably marked most clearly – they are lexicalised, after all. The challenge, however, is how to interpret and translate them. For example, the 1953 AFRI-KAANSE BYBEL renders the discourse marker לָכֵן that is used in Judges 8:6–7 as daarom [therefore]: "Maar die vorste van Sukkot vra: Is die handpalm van Seba en van Sálmuna nou al in u hand, dat ons aan u leër brood moet gee? Toe sê Gibeon: Daarom (לָכֵן), as die Here Seba en Sálmuna in my hand gee, sal ek julle vlees met woestyndorings en distels dors." ["But the officials of Succoth asked: Is the palm of Zebah and Zalmunna already in your hand that we must give your army bread? Then Gideon said, "Therefore (לָכֵן), if the Lord gives Zebah and Zalmunna in

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[18]   FISCHER 2006.

my hand, will I flail your flesh with desert thorns and briars."]. This
expression, which occurs 200 times in the Old Testament, is indeed
typically translated as daarom [therefore] as the 1953 AFRIKAANSE BYBEL
(and also the KJV) does. However, it is rendered differently in the
majority of recent literal translations (among others) as "for this cause"
(NKJV), "all right" (NASB), "fürwahr" (ELBERFELDER), "well then" (ESV
and NRSV), "okay then" (ISV), "I swear" (NJPS) and "just for that" (NIV).
Some translations closer to the functionally equivalent end of the spectrum
simply omit it (1983 AFRIKAANSE BYBEL and NLT) or interpret it as "since
you will not help" (NET) or "nee dat nie" ["no not that"] (NBV). Others
correspond with the more literal translations, for example using "just for
that" (CEB), "all right!" (GNB) or "very well" (NJB).

What all these different translation possibilities suggest is that there
are many translation options besides the traditional "daarom" ["there-
fore"]. However, just because a translation option fits, does not mean that
the communicative clue has been understood correctly. The variety of
translation options probably indicates that the translators were not quite
certain how to handle this clue.

Discourse markers are some of the most difficult linguistic items to
analyse and describe. Providing only a few translation options for an
ancient language such as Biblical Hebrew does not solve the problem, as
the example from Judges 8 shows. For many years I have been trying to
understand these little words better, and I can only confirm that discourse
markers have become "the cradle of contemporary linguistic semantics"
since the 1960s: they are "a unique window onto both the complexity of
language construction and interpretation and the understanding of what
meaning is about," as NEMO 2006, 375 puts it. In a direct translation, the
challenge is to do justice to all the communicative clues of the source text
– especially the discourse markers.

Cases such as לָכֵן challenge scholars with the question, Do you really
know how meaning works? This confronts them with the reality that
language is a dynamic and complex system. The meaning of a linguistic
symbol is not an objective reality that can always be captured in neat,
timeless definitions or assumed lexical equivalents. The meaning of words
can change as people use them. The problem with this is that it cannot be
predicted whether – and, if so, exactly how – these changes will take
place. The best that linguists can do is provide explanations of how the
changes occurred. Here cognitive semantics has provided insights in recent

years, for example, that the meaning of linguistic expressions typically changes and expands according to general principles. Metaphorical and metonymical shifts are good examples in this regard.

It is important, however, not to lose sight of the cognitive world and the world of experience of the speakers, or of the fact that the connotation of a linguistic expression can become part of the meaning of a word through convention – that is to say, through regular use in a specific context. From my study of לָכֵן, it appeared that the expression had a semantic core, namely "under these circumstances".[19] In the Old Testament, prophets mostly used it to announce punishment for their audience after the cause of the announcement of punishment had been described very clearly. So when speakers of Biblical Hebrew heard a prophet say, "Daarom (לָכֵן), so spreek die Here: …" ["Therefore (לָכֵן), thus says the Lord…"], they knew that some punishment or other would be announced and that it would be justified and/or unavoidable "under the circumstances".

It is possible that some translators instead chose "I swear" (NJPS) or "fürwahr" (ELBERFELDER) as the translation of לָכֵן precisely because Judges 8 also announces a punishment. The above study of this particle indicates that, when it is used in a nonprophetic context in a dialogue between two speakers, speaker B uses לָכֵן to admit to what speaker A has claimed, but usually follows that by proposing an alternative that neutrallises speaker A's claim or accusation. This happens in only a few instances, but then it definitely has a different connotation from that of prophetic announcement. Compare the following example from Genesis 30:15: "But Leah said to her: 'Is it not enough that you took my husband? Do you now also want to take my sons mandrakes?' Thereupon Rachel responded: 'Alright then (לָכֵן), he may sleep with you tonight in exchange for your sons mandrakes.'"

So in a direct translation, לָכֵן in Judges 8:7 would not simply be omitted (as some functionally equivalent translations have done) or translated as "daarom" ["therefore"] (as in the 1953 AFRIKAANSE BYBEL). Instead, it would be rendered as "all right", "you are right" or "granted".

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[19]   See VAN DER MERWE 2014a, 1–32.

Conclusion

The "direct translation" that the BSSA is preparing at the request of churches that use the Bible in Afrikaans is not a new word-for-word translation of the Bible. This descriptive study illustrates the technical nature of the term. It expresses in particular an effort to provide an innovative solution to the age-old tension between loyalty to the author of the ancient source text and its comprehensibility to serious readers of the Bible today. Although it does offer a solution, the term also gives rise to many new challenges. It brings ordinary readers face to face with the otherness of the language, culture and world of these texts. Linguists and translators of Biblical Hebrew are faced with the sobering reality of all the factors that need to be considered (and researched) in an attempt to translate an ancient text "directly". Because they sometimes have to rely on reconstructions of the conceptual world behind the source text, linguists and translators must concede in such cases that the translation solutions and the explanations they may offer are provisional.

This article has confirmed Gutt's characterisation of Bible translation as a very difficult form of secondary communication, and his concept of communicative clues is useful. However, the finer detail of his characterisation of these clues is fairly vague. Exactly how the meaning of (e.g.) discourse markers work – in other words, how their meaning develops and how their uses and differences in nuance can be described in an ancient, nonspoken language – still needs to be researched more systematically in terms of the insights provided by cognitive semantics. The same applies to the conceptual world(s) behind the semantic potential of other Biblical Hebrew expressions (e.g. נֶפֶשׁ and קָדוֹשׁ). If this applies to Biblical Hebrew, the same types of challenges most probably will have to be confronted when texts from other ancient languages are translated directly. It is thus not too far-fetched to regard this perspective on translation, on the one hand, as a catalyst for research on ancient texts, and on the other, as an important skopos for interdisciplinary research on such texts.

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