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Bible Translation and Globalization
— a Cognitive Perspective

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1. Introduction

As Anthony Hopkins has put it, "Since its inception, the concept of globalization has inspired numerous competing definitions and interpretations" (2002 4). Rather than entering into this competition, all that is needed here is a brief characterization of the focus of this paper within that vast territory. One of the challenging outcomes of globalization is that it brings into contact people who may be total strangers to each other: "people are communicating, they are sharing knowledge and experience without knowing each other personally, maybe even without knowing anything about each other …" (Schäffner 2000 1). The problems that arise from such interaction between people from very diverse backgrounds tend to be discussed on the macro-levels

of sociology and cultural studies, dealing with issues of cultural identity, formation of stereotypes, power issues and the like. In the field of Translation Studies, they also tend to be seen as closely linked to matters of language. Thus Schäffner writes, "Scholars working in the areas of linguistics, communication studies, and in particular Translation Studies, are above all interested in the effects on languages and language use," and then she provides a fairly long list of questions, most of which relate to some aspect of language or other (Schäffner 2000 2) "More specifically, they attempt to find answers to the following questions: In which language(s) is information made available on the Internet? In which language(s) do people communicate and interact at a global level? What does this mean for the individual languages, i.e. their status as a means of communication and their actual form and structure when being used? And what does it mean for the attitude of the speakers, i.e. their attitude to their mother tongue and/or a foreign language? Will one language become a global, or globalised, language? Which one? Will it be English? Assuming such a global language develops, what will be the consequences for translation and interpreting? Will there be counter-developments, opposing trends, to globalisation? Are such (potential) counter-developments also reflected in linguistic developments? Are we as scholars aware of the challenges we will be faced with due to these developments? Are we prepared to deal with them? How will our disciplines develop? And specifically: where is the discipline of Translation Studies today, and where is it going?" (Schäffner 2000 2)

While focusing on communication problems arising from contact between people from diverse backgrounds, this paper will be different in two major aspects. Firstly, it will not address the matter at the level of the collective, that is, of society and culture, but at the level of the cognitive faculties that enable individuals to communicate with each other. Secondly, the argumentation will not focus on language matters, such as the role or status of the languages involved, or the effect globalization might have on them. It will rather attempt to highlight the special cognitive challenges that arise when people with very

different backgrounds attempt to communicate with one another.

The combination of these two perspectives, the cognitive abilities that underlie human communication and the challenges that highly unfamiliar backgrounds present to them provide the framework for this discussion of Bible translation. Given the multi-faceted nature of the notion of globalization, one could, of course, deal with Bible translation from many other aspects, for example, the impact of web and internet, issues of cultural identity, tribalization or language use. The main reason for the choice of my particular focus is, on the one hand, the fundamental importance of these aspects for the communicative success of Bible translation in the global information market, and on the other hand the lack of attention given to them up to now. In addition, as I will briefly point out toward the end of the paper, I believe that these considerations can have important wider implications, especially in dealing with the tension between globalization and tribalization. In order to avoid misunderstandings, I should point out that in line with the cognitive orientation of this paper, that the term ‘communicative success’ is used here in the limited, technical sense of recognizing what a communicator intended to convey.

At a very basic level, translation is an offer of information, or more specifically, as Reiss and Vermeer have put it, "an offer of information … about an offer of information" (Reiss and Vermeer 1984 105; translation my own) 'Translation ist ein Informationsangebot in einer Zielkultur und deren Sprache über ein Informationsangebot aus einer Ausgangskultur und deren Sprache." (Reiss and Vermeer 1984 105). In the context of globalization, then, Bible translation is part of the wide range of information on offer in the "global marketplace." As many of you will be aware, the Bible is one of the most widely translated books, at least as far as the number of languages is concerned; according to recent statistics, by the end of December 2008 the Bible or portions of it had been translated into 2479 languages of the total of 6909 languages known today (see chart). This remarkable achievement is due

to a large degree to the vision that all people groups, whatever their language and wherever they might live, should have access to the biblical writings in a language they understand well. Currently, it is estimated that to reach this goal, the Bible needs to be translated into another 2393 languages. Thus Bible translation has been driven by a strong global vision.

Historically, biblical texts were often the first printed publications in a language, and sometimes remained the only ones for considerable periods of time. For further information see e.g. Noss (2007). With the advance of technology and globalization, this situation has drastically changed—even in remote areas people tend to have access to a much wider range of information, not necessarily through the print medium, but through radio, video and DVD players, mobile phones or international television by satellite. Thus, taking a global view, offers of information enter into stiffer and stiffer competition—and this is, of course, true for Bible translation. For example, already in 2002 the media noted that as far as the number of published copies is concerned, that with 110 million copies, printed in 46 languages, the circulation of the catalogue of the Swedish furnishing company IKEA was four times as large as that of the Bible. (See Appendix, Fig. 1.)

In the face of these developments, a good understanding of the factors at work in this global competition for attention seems important. These factors are, naturally, complex and will vary widely around the globe, so that a comprehensive treatment of them in this paper is out of the question. Rather, as already mentioned, this paper will concentrate on certain aspects of cognition that are basic to human communication and where research has made considerable progress in the last three or so decades.

2. Cognitive Environment and Communicability in Translation

Some very helpful insights into these issues come from the relevance theory of communication. This cognitive theory was originally developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986; 1995) but is now being pursued by scholars around the globe. For a good overview of the literature, see, for example, http://www.ua.es/personal/francisco.yus/rt.html last accessed 11/09/2009. Two of the fundamental points of this theory are, firstly, that the intended meaning of a text or utterance is not derived by linguistic decoding alone but by inference. That is, the audience or readership combine what has been encoded with other information already available to them and infer from both together what the communicator intended to convey. Secondly, this inferential process is driven and guided by the search for relevance; we allot our attention to offers of information on the basis of their—perceived—relevance to us; and secondly, criteria of relevance are crucial in the comprehension process for determining what the intended meaning is. Thus relevance is a central factor in human communication.

So, what is relevance? For information to be relevant, it must modify our thoughts or, in relevance-theoretic terms, our *cognitive environment*, in certain worthwhile ways. These modifications are called 'cognitive effects'. For more detailed information see Sperber and Wilson (1995). Note that 'cognitive effects' were originally referred to as 'contextual effects.' What is this concept of 'cognitive environment'? Is it perhaps what has traditionally been referred to as 'context'? In relevance theory, the cognitive environment is a very comprehensive, psychological notion. It consists of all and any thoughts which a person is capable of thinking at a given point in time and which s/he would be prepared to accept as true or probably true. "An individual's total cognitive environment is the set of all facts that he can perceive or infer: all the facts that are manifest to him. An individual's total cognitive environment is a function of his physical environment and his cognitive abilities" (Sperber and

Wilson 1995 39). "A fact is manifest to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true" (Sperber and Wilson 1995 39). Such thoughts can be about anything at all－the particular situation one finds oneself in, history, culture, religion, perceptual input from the physical environment (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste), science, social conventions, personal relations, and so forth. The cognitive environment includes even thoughts we may never have entertained before, but which follow from beliefs we already hold. In fact, for successful comprehension it is immaterial under which domain of life one might classify a piece of information—all that matters is whether it is available for the derivation of cognitive effects at the right time or not. On the matter of successful comprehension or understanding: "Understanding is achieved when the communicative intention is fulfilled—that is, when the audience recognises the informative intention" (Wilson and Sperber 2004 611). Those parts the of cognitive environment, that are intended to be used for the derivation of cognitive effects of a particular text or utterance are its context: "the set of premises used in interpreting an utterance" (Sperber and Wilson 1995 15).

This inherent dependence of communication on the cognitive environment of people, leads to a *cognitive communicability condition*: In earlier presentations I called it simply "communicability condition" however, since other, non-cognitive factors can also affect the success of an act of communication, it seems appropriate to refer to this condition as the "cognitive communication condition."

> The intended meaning of an utterance or text can be communicated to an audience only to the extent that the necessary contextual information is readily accessible in their cognitive environment. (Gutt 2006a; audiovisual presentation, no page number)

Note that this communicability condition expresses a dependency between

information in the cognitive environment and the actual content of the communication—the meaning to be communicated. In other words, it amounts to saying that not just any information can be communicated to anybody, but that their cognitive environment determines what can be communicated to a given individual or group of people at that point in time.

At first sight, this point might seem rather obvious; one knows that a lecture on set theory for advanced students would be lost on someone who does not have the necessary background knowledge in mathematics. When historians seek to understand a document from a period other than their own, they will make sure that they are as familiar as possible with that period of time. Yet, there has been little understanding of the cognitive underpinnings of this requirement for communication in general; more importantly for our topic, this requirement seems to be largely ignored when it comes to translation: there appears to be a strong expectation that if a work from another language has been translated into one's own language, then it ought to be intelligible to anybody speaking that language. If not, the translator is suspected of not having done his/her job properly. This is particularly true of what one might call the 'communicative' approaches to translation developed in the 2nd half of last century. Thus Nida and Taber claimed that "Anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message" (Nida and Taber 1969 4). It is clear from the context here that the authors are not just talking about effability in anabstract sense, but about communication, including understanding. One piece of evidence of this view is that few translations seem to alert readers that, in order to understand the translated text, they may have to familiarize themselves with the socio-cultural, historical, or geographical setting of the source text. Let me illustrate this with quotes from introductions to some major current translations of the Bible into English:

Translation 1:

In the *Contemporary English Version* every word, phrase, and clause of the original was carefully studied by the translators. Then, with equal care, they tried to find the best way to translate the verse so it could be easily read and understood. As a result, the form is very different, but the meaning is both accurate and clear. *Bible for Today's Family: New Testament*. New York: American Bible Society 1991, ii; italics as in original.

Translation 2:

[Goals of the translation were] … that it would be an accurate translation and one that would have clarity and literary quality and so prove suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use. *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978, vi.

Translation 3:

The primary concern of the translators has been to provide a faithful translation of the meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts. Their first task was to understand correctly the meaning of the original. …the translators' next task was to express that meaning in a manner and form easily understood by the readers. *New Life: Good News Bible with colour features* Glasgow: Collins 1987, vii/viii.

Translation 4:

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning of the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts as accurately as possible to the modern reader. … The challenge for the translators was to create a text that would makethe same impact in the life of modern readers that the original text had for the original readers. In the New Living Translation, this is accomplished by translating entire thoughts (rather than just words) into natural, everyday English. The end result is a translation that is easy to read and understand and that accurately

communicates the meaning of the original text. *Holy Bible: New Living Translation. Easy to understand; relevant to today*. Text and product preview. Wheaton: Tyndale House 1996.

All these introductions create the impression that qualities like clarity, accuracy, naturalness and ease of understanding are primarily matters of appropriate language use. None of them alert the readers that, in order to successfully understand the biblical texts, they might need to familiarize themselves with the cognitive environments which these texts presuppose.

The neglect of the communicability condition arising from the interdependence of thought content and cognitive environment is particularly serious in the field of Bible translation for a number of reasons.

One cluster of reasons is religious in nature: as is well-known, for many Christians the Bible holds a unique position as God's inspired and authoritative revelation to all humankind. The successful communication of its contents is therefore seen as of utmost importance: it is not just a matter of academic understanding, but has consequences for the attitudes, behavior, well-being and even eternal destiny of people. When Nida was spearheading the 'communicative movement'in Bible translation around the middle of the last century, he and Taber wrote the following passage which strongly reflects this concern:

> …in religious translating, despite consecrated talent and painstaking efforts, a comprehension of the basic principles of translation and communication has lagged behind translating in the secular fields. One specialist in translating and interpreting for the aviation industry commented that in his work he did not dare to employ the principles often followed by translators of the Bible: "With us," he said, "complete intelligibility is a matter of life and death." Unfortunately, translators of religious materials have sometimes not been prompted by the same feeling of urgency to make sense. (Nida and Taber 1969, 1)Similar concerns are expressed by Beekman and Callow: "Thus the translator has

> two guiding principles where the issue of fidelity is concerned - fidelity to the meaning and fidelity to the dynamics of the original. Both are hard to attain; but unless they are attained, the message of the Word of God will be distorted or obscure, and the recipients of the RL version will not be given the opportunity to understand clearly what it is that God is saying to them. When this happens, the translator defeats his own purpose." (1974 44)

The other problem area has to do with the content of the biblical texts: not only is the bulk of the biblical texts concerned with particular events and experiences that arose in quite specific historical and geographical circumstances, both the writers and their readers were also part of quite specific historical, geographical and social conditions. In other words, both the events written about and what was written about them were part of very specific cognitive environments. The cognitive environments of contemporary readers, however, are often very different from those settings.

Given the inferential nature of human communication, significant differences in cognitive environments in areas relevant to a particular communication event predict significant communication problems.

There is evidence that such communication problems have occurred in Bible translation, though they have rarely been made the object of scientific investigation. One study was done by Wayne Dye and reported in his book *The Bible translation strategy*(Dye 1980). His study was a partial response to concerns about the differences in impact on the receptor communities that Bible translations had. In 1971 this concern was expressed as follows in a letter among the leaders of one of the biggest Bible translation organizations:

> It is obvious that, in the 510 language projects attempted thus far, some have been more successful than others. These uneven results are determined by a multiplicity of factors. Unfortunately these factors have never been fully identified, nor has the effectiveness of the various field methods adopted been weighed in relation to specific combinations of

> these factors as found in widely-separated language groups. From a letter from Kietzman to Ben Elson, then Vice-president of SIL, cited in Dye (1980 18).

So, looked at from the perspective of globalization, these translations did not necessarily do well in the global information market.

In response, in his doctoral studies Dye systematically investigated a whole range of factors in 15 Bible translation projects in different parts of the world. His findings, published in 1980, led him to formulate what he called 'the principle of personal relevance':

> Eventually it became clear that the heart of most of these differences could be described in terms of a single dimension …
> PEOPLE RESPOND TO THE GOSPEL IN PROPORTION TO THEIR CONVICTION THAT GOD AND HIS WORD ARE RELEVANT TO THE CONCERNS OF DAILY LIFE. This will be called the principle of 'Personal Relevance'. (Dye 1980, 39 capitals as in original)

Dye's findings met with a mixed reception and have remained somewhat controversial. In his foreword, while welcoming the study, the International Translation Coordinator of SIL at the time did point out that "Some readers may find parts of this dissertation controversial" and felt the need to emphasize that its publication "… does not imply endorsement by the SIL organisation of these views" (Dye 1980 10). Nevertheless, it seems significant that around the same time this Bible translation organization launched a new publication series: "Notes on Scripture in Use". Complementing the existing series of "Notes on Translation", "Notes on Linguistics" and "Notes on Anthropology," this series began to focus on issues of the use people actually made of the translated Bible portions and Bibles. The organization also set up a new "Scripture in Use"department at the international level. All this would seem to indicate that the concerns about the communicative impact of the translated products was a

significant concern. There is no suggestion here that differences in cognitive environments are the only factor responsible for Scripture in Use; there are obviously many other factors at work.

Around the same time similar concerns were expressed in another major Bible translation organization. Peacock (1981) made a strong plea that Bible translations alone were not enough to get the message across but required accompanying notes for correct understanding:

> The day is gone when the bare text can be put in the hands of the reader if he is expected to understand the message. He needs help in bridging the temporal and cultural gap between the biblical period and today … … notes provide information for the reader without which the text cannot be understood correctly. (Peacock 1981 8)

It seems to be highly significant that these concerns did not arise from formal equivalence translations, where the translation theory of the day would have anticipated such problems. Rather, these were translations done under the guidelines of the communicative translation approaches, as advocated by Nida (1964; Nida and Taber 1969) as well Beekman and Callow (1974) and others, and quality-checked by experienced consultants. According to the theory of the day, these translations should have communicated very well and achieved a high level of response.

That these problems persist to this day seems to be indicated by the research results of Harriet Hill (2003; 2006). Her study, involving extensive comprehension testing, showed that even a translation of biblical texts following the principles of communicative translation reached only a comprehension level of around 30%, but that the score doubled when significant amounts of relevant background information were given as well.

While these observations cannot ‘prove’ that the insights of relevance theory are correct, they certainly seem to be very much in line with them – in

contrast to the 'communicative' translation theories, which certainly did not predict such significant problems.

If we then, at least tentatively, accept that there is some merit to these insights, what can be done about them?

3. Overcoming Communicability Problems in Translation

3.1 General Considerations

As we said above, problems arise when people are offered information for which their current cognitive environment does not contain the necessary contextual assumptions. I have coined the term congruity to characterize the relationship between cognitive environments with regard to the availability of contextual information needed for a particular instance of communication:

> The cognitive environment of the audience is said to be congruous with that of the communicator to the degree that they (mutually) share the assumptions envisaged as context for that act of communication. (Adapted from Gutt 2008) On mutuality: "Any shared cognitive environment in which it is manifest which people share it is what we will call a *mutual cognitive environment*. In a mutual cognitive environment, for every manifest assumption, the fact that it is manifest to the people who share this environment is itself manifest." (Sperber and Wilson 1995 41-42)

In situations where the cognitive environments are not congruous, the solution is, in principle, to overcome the incongruity—that is, to ensure that the audience and communicators do share the contextual assumptions needed for a particular act of communication. Of course, a complete sharing may rarely, if ever occur, simply because it is doubtful that two people ever entertain the exact same thought. Relevance theory recognizes that clearly communication

tends to be approximate rather than exact: "It seems to us neither paradoxical nor counterintuitive to say that there are thoughts that we cannot exactly share, and that communication can be successful without resulting in an exact duplication of thoughts in communicator and audience. We see communication as a matter of enlarging mutual cognitive environments, not of duplicating thoughts" (Sperber and Wilson 1995 193). However, this does not change the fact that the degree of difference in cognitive environments, or more correctly of incongruity, does affect the degree of understanding achievable.

Since communicability depends upon both the cognitive environments and the contents to be communicated, there are logically three options for establishing congruity, and hence for fulfilling the conditions for cognitive communicability:

Options for bringing about congruity in incongruous communication situations

1) The content is left unchanged and the cognitive environment of the audienceis adjusted so that it contains all the necessary contextual assumptions.
2) The cognitive environment of the audience is left unchanged, and the content to be communicated is adjusted to it.
3) Some adjustments are made to both contents and cognitive environment of the audience so that congruity is achieved. (This option actually comprises a whole range of possible solutions.)

Table 1

Several comments seem to be in order here. For a more extensive discussion see Gutt (2008). First of all, all three options require adjustment in *information*—in the cognitive environment, in the contents to be communicated or in both. This means that any claim of universal translatability of any content through *language* adjustments alone needs to be modified: whether a particular message can be communicated across language-boundaries depends not just on the linguistic means of the language of the receptors but crucially on their cognitive environment.

Secondly, since options 2 and 3 involve changes to the contents to be communicated, one could say that for these two options the differences in cognitive environment have a *filter effect on the actual contents of the communication*: the nature of the cognitive environment of the audience determines what information can be communicated successfully to them at a certain point in time. The only way to achieve successful communication without this content filtering is by ensuring that the receptors' cognitive environment is congruous with that assumed for the source text. (To what degree that is possible in any concrete case is another issue.)

Thirdly, for all options it is not enough that some adjustments are made but the adjustments have to be *sufficient* to lead to communicability; otherwise the communication will still be impaired. We shall return to this point in the next section.

Fourthly, from a purely cognitive perspective, all of these options are of equal value in that, if properly applied, any of them can bring about cognitive communicability; cognitively or communicatively speaking, none of them is "better" or "worse" than the others.

3.2 The Term 'translation' as a Problem

However, this neutrality of value quickly disappears when entering the realm not only of Bible translation, but of translation in general. The term "translation" is widely taken to imply unchanged contents, in distinction to other "freer" cross-language communications like "paraphrases," "adaptations," "abridgements" or the like. For the religious reasons mentioned above, these expectations tend to be particularly strong when it comes to "Bible translation": the label "Bible translation" is widely held to entail that the contents, often referred to as "the message," of the biblical texts has been preserved essentially unchanged. It tends to have a strong positive connotation, especially when contrasted with labels like "paraphrase". When a new rendering of biblical texts

is presented as a "Bible translation," it usually undergoes considerable scrutiny among readers and biblical scholars alike. An interesting recent example is the German translation *Das Neue Testament und frühchristliche Schriften* by Klaus Berger and Christiane Nord, Frankfurt: Insel Verlag, 1999. Nord (2004) defends this version as a translation ('Übersetzung") against the criticism of being a freer rendering ('Übertragung").

Yet for all the importance attached to the term "translation," the fact of the matter is that, despite centuries of scholarly thinking and discussion, we seem to be no closer to any consensus of what the distinguishing characteristics of something that deserves the name "translation" actually are. In fact, in Translation Studies the trend seems to rather go in the opposite direction. For example, with the emergence of "functional equivalence" the condition of unchanged content ("message") was no longer generally regarded as a necessary quality of a "translation". In 1984, Frawley claimed that translation theory had abandoned "the ridiculous insistence on ‘preservation of meaning’"(1984 173). Some scholars, like Hönig and Kußmaul (1984) have challenged the requirement of equivalence in function as a defining characteristic of translation. Reiss and Vermeer (1984) have claimed that, as far as a general translation theory is concerned, not only can contents and function change in translation, but also the purpose of the text. "Es muß ganz klar erkannt werden, daßdie Beibehaltung des Zwecks, wie sie Translationen oft zugeschrieben wird, eine kulturspezifische Regel, keine Grundforderung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie ist" (Reiss and Vermeer 1984 103). 'It must be recognized very clearly that keeping the purpose constant, as is often said of translations, is a culture specific rule, not a basic requirement of a general translation theory" (translation my own, EAG). This raises the question of what, if anything, differentiates translation from other modes of cross-language communication like "abridgment" or "paraphrase." For further discussion of this issue see Gutt (2000). It has also been suggested that the notion "translation" ought not to be limited to textual products, but should be extended to other

ways of cross-cultural communication, including "the practical decision to learn new languages" (Cummings 2005 208). In view of such increasing divergence, Tymoczko is proposing to consider "translation" as a "cluster concept " in the Wittgensteinian sense (2007).

As I argue in Gutt (2008), the root cause of this persisting state of uncertainty and divergence appears to be that "translation" is a *genre* term in the sense proposed by Unger (2006); genre terms reflect cultural notions and are communicatively significant in that they can help to *coordinate* the expectations of the audience with the intentions of the communicator: if the audience know from the start that the communicator is offering them information of the genre 'poetry,' 'business letter' or 'minutes of a meeting,' then their knowledge of these genre types will make it easier for them to infer the intended interpretation.

To treat "translation" as a cultural genre concept may, at first sight, not appear particularly original. Cf. e.g. Toury (1985; 1995), and especially the recent discussions in Tymoczko (2007) and Hermans (2007). However, if one considers that this may be *all* there is to this term or concept then far-reaching consequences arise. Among other things it would mean that translation studies is at heart an ethnoscientific discipline; the insights it can provide are essentially socio-cultural in nature: "The set of phenomena to which social group A applies the term 'translation' has the properties x, y, z." Beyond that, it makes no sense to ask what translation 'is.' That means, the denotation or extension of this concept is determined by the views that a particular group of people holds – comparable to genre terms like "novel," "comedy," or "musical" there is no a priori reason why different people groups should hold similar views, there is no a priori basis on which to judge which group is "right" or "wrong" in their use of their term, or why any particular group should have such a concept at all. There is no time to take this argument further here and now. This matter will be discussed at some length in (Gutt forthcoming).

What is important in the current context is that the communicative usefulness of such genre terms is dependent on a number of important conditions. One is that, for a genre term to fulfill this coordinating role, the expectations it evokes are, in fact, similar for both communicator and audience; if their notions are rather different, then it cannot achieve its coordinating function－it may, in fact, hinder rather than help the communication process. In other words, the particular expectations associated by a group of people with a particular genre term are an important part of their cognitive environment. The amount of debate the use of the term "translation" has generated seems to speak clearly of the difference in expectations it has for different people. Another condition is that the expectations it raises are realistic －that they are, for example, in agreement with the way human communication works. As we pointed out above, this is not necessarily the case; at least for certain groups of people, the term "translation" appears to raise strong expectations of comprehensibility *regardless* of their familiarity with the cognitive environment in which the text arose.

How can these problems bound up with the term "translation"be overcome in a global information market where people from very different cognitive environments interact with each other?

One immediately available strategy is to avoid using this term altogether and to describe for the readership what they can expect from the rendering without using the term "translation". This would be appropriate where it is doubtful that the expectations it raises in the receptors' minds are both intended and cognitively realistic. Alternatively, if one does want to use that term, then there should be an explanation of what is meant by it, as translators have sometimes done informally or more formally through a statement of their 'translation brief' (cf. Nord 1997) or through 'thick translation' in the sense of Hermans (2007).

If the term "translation" *without* additional explanations were to become an effective means of coordinating expectations globally, at least two conditions

would need to be fulfilled: a) the expectations raised would have to be cognitively realistic; b) the expectations it raised would have to be the same anywhere in the world. I leave it to each participant here to assess the likelihood of this happening.

3.3 Dealing with Incongruity of Cognitive Environments

Leaving now the issue of what genre label is applied to a particular event or product, whenever a cross-cultural act of communication requires the addressees to use contextual information not readily available in their cognitive environment, then there still remains the issue that the success of the communication will depend on the degree to which they get access to this information.

Of course, Bible translators have included background information for the reader for a long time, be it by notes of various kinds, adjustments in the actual text, introductions, glossaries, or pictures and illustrations. When taking this route, the cross-cultural communicator has to take great care to ensure not only that the additional information provided is actually relevant to the intended contents of the text—irrelevance endangers communicability, as we saw earlier on—but also that it is *sufficient* to deal with the incongruity in the cognitive environments for this particular communication. Many well-meant translations seem to fail with regard to these two points: sometimes the information they provide is of general interest but seems to contribute little to understanding the particular passage; and very often the information provided is far from enough for overcoming incongruity.

This point is of considerable importance for Bible translation because, as I have argued elsewhere, in many situations the levels of incongruity involved seem to require more help than can be packed between the covers of a translated book (Gutt 1988; 2006a; 2006b; 2008). The particular areas of incongruity will, of course, vary from one receptor culture to another as well

as from one part of the biblical text to another. Cf. Peacock's plea for what he calls "audience research": "Before adequate notes can be prepared the specific needs of the reader must be discovered. The assumption has often been made that the translator, translating into his own mother tongue, will intuitively know what the needs of his reader are. It is now evident that this is not always the case, and audience research must be carried out in a more extensive way" (1981 8). If the goal of communicability is to be achieved throughout, Bible translation needs to be seen as part of more comprehensive programs of biblical communication that afford adequate and effective means of bridging the cultural distances involved. There have been some developments that take such wider views, like McIlwain's *Firm foundations* McIlwain, T. 1991. Firm foundations: creation to Christ. Sanford, FL: New Tribes Mission, the Bible Storying movement Various agencies are now active in this area; see, for example, http://www.chronologicalbiblestorying.com/, http://www.onestory.org., or building up context over time through appropriate sequencing of translated materials (cf. Brown 2003). For a wider discussion of these issues see Hill (2004). Though these developments are not necessarily built on a better understanding of the cognitive underpinnings of communication, they do seem to go in the right general direction. Hill and Hill (2008), which is informed by insights of relevance theory, is a practice-oriented book that raises a range of issues as well as suggesting some solutions. In my view, we are still very much at the beginning of exploring the wide variety of options that exist, especially through multi-media technology, to establish what, one may call "Bible-cultures literacy," to adapt Hirsch's notion of 'cultural literacy' to the area of Bible translation (Hirsch 1987). The plural 'Bible cultures' in this phrase is significant since the cultural background assumed can be very different from one book of the Bible to another. In Gutt (2006b) and elsewhere I used the term "biblical literacy." However, this is usually taken in the sense of the knowledge one has of the Bible, e.g. with what biblical texts one is familiar. Since what is meant here is quite different from that I have

chosen a different term to avoid confusion.

One far-reaching consequence of these considerations is that whenever the incongruity is great enough to require more comprehensive adjustment strategies, the responsibility for communicability can no longer lie with the translators alone, not even with the translation institutions for which they might work. The reason is not only that the organization and implementation of such comprehensive adjustment programs will often go far beyond their possibilities and resources; more importantly, perhaps, the success of these programs themselves will largely depend on the degree to which the receptors will actively participate in them. Context adjustment is, at the end of the day, a process of learning, and learning requires effort, and expenditure of additional effort requires motivation. Of course, modern audio-visual media can make learning more exciting and pleasurable than print alone ever could do. Nevertheless, it does require additional effort and time on the part of the learners.

One important factor in motivating larger social groups to invest such additional effort is to give them a clearer picture of the extent and significance of the problem. As long as people think of cross-cultural communication primarily in terms of language differences, their awareness of how much they may need to learn about the cognitive environment of others in order to understand them, will remain rather limited. Since this view seems very widespread and is often subconsciously held, it may well take general educational efforts to effectively overcome it and replace it with an understanding of the crucial importance of cognitive environments for the success of communication. It would, for example, go a long way if basic teaching about the inferential nature of human communication became an integral part of formal education programs globally.

Another important factor for motivating people is, of course, to convince them of the value of the investment. This should not be too hard: we all know that successful communication makes life easier and that miscommunication

causes problems. So, once people realize that familiarization with the cognitive environment of others can enhance communicative success and avoid problems, this should increase their motivation to spend the additional effort.

4. Conclusion

The inferential nature of human communication entails a cognitive communicability condition which shows that, in cross-cultural communication incongruity in cognitive environments needs to be taken as seriously as language differences. One major factor on which the future place of translated biblical texts in the global information market depends will therefore be the implementation of effective strategies for overcoming such incongruities. There is evidence that the development of such strategies is still held back by inadequate views of communication and unrealistic expectations of 'translation.' Therefore, there also need to be educational efforts to overcome these views.

In closing, I would like to point out that education about the inferential nature of communication and the resulting necessity to learn about each others cognitive environments will have a pay-off not only for cross-cultural communication conducted under the label of "Bible translation," or even "translation" it will benefit *any* act of cross-cultural communication that involves incongruity of cognitive environments between the communication partners. It therefore appears to be of major significance at a time when globalization leads to closer and closer interaction between people from increasingly different backgrounds. The "language industry," as it has sometimes been called, with its focus on overcoming language barriers does, of course, play an important role. However, it cannot and does not relieve us of the responsibility of familiarizing ourselves with the cognitive environments of others. That is something each participant in the global communication process needs to do. If we take this task seriously, it should also help to counteract

some of the more ominous outcomes of globalization—such as the specter of the monolithic "McWorld" culture and its unfortunate consequences pictured in Barber's article 'Jihad vs. McWorld'. Barber, Benjamin. 1992. Jihad vs. McWorld. *The Atlantic Monthly* 3: 53-63.

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[Abstract]

Bible Translation and Globalization —a Cognitive Perspective

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As the range of information on offer in the global information market keeps growing, the Bible, as one of the most widely translated books, faces increasing competition. Applying cognitive insights into the inferential nature of communication, this paper highlights the significance of the cognitive communicability condition for successful communication. This condition is particularly important in Bible translation because the incongruity in cognitive environments between receptors and original readership is often very high. Another problem is the term 'translation' in that the expectations it raises tend not to be standardized and that they lack in realism with respect to the cognitive workings of communication. The paper makes suggestions for how both these problem areas might be addressed. It ends by pointing out how a clearer recognition of the cognitive communicability condition can be of value more generally in globalization.

Appendix

Ikea catalogue beats the Bible

by Suzanne Stevenson

It is the biggest thing to come from Sweden since Abba - but now Ikea's catalogue has become so popular it has more devotees than the Bible.

The Swedish home furnishing company, which once invited customers to 'chuck out your chintz', will distribute 110million copies of its brochure this year,

That gives it an annual circulation four times greater than the Good Book. The 300-page free catalogue is printed in 46 languages, distributed to 33 countries and takes about a year to compile.

The Ikea catalogue is now more popular than the Bible.

Figure 1

(© Associated Newspapers Ltd., 27 August 2002; http://msn.thisislondon.co.uk/dynamic/property/homes/story.html?in_review_id=679236&in_review_text_id=651618; last accessed 17.10.2004)

Chart on Progress of Bible Translation Statistics

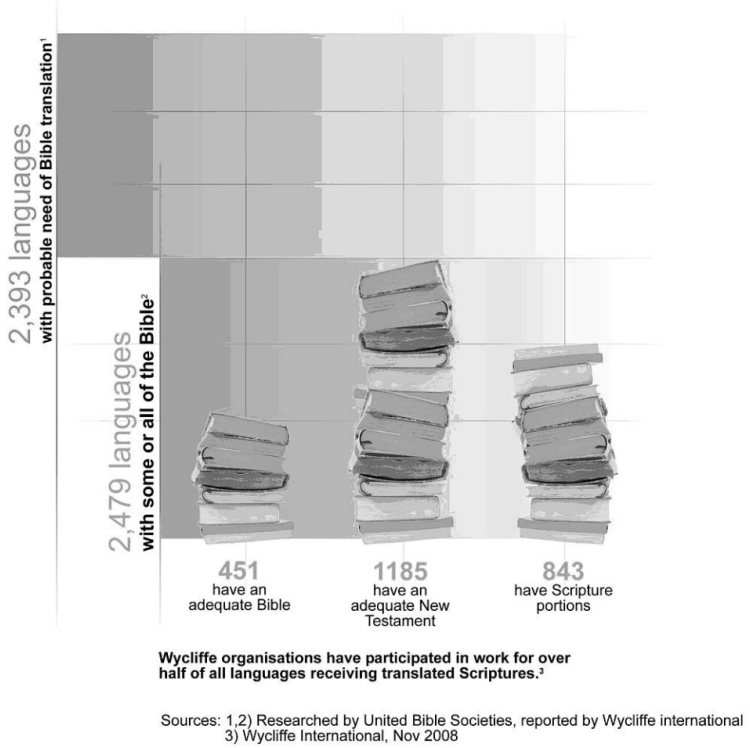

Chart 1

(Source: http://www.wycliffe.net/ScriptureAccessStatistics/tabid/73/language/en-US/Default.aspx, last accessed 25/10/2009)

▸ Key Words: Bible translation, globalization, cognition, communicability, communication, relevance theory

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