

* * * * *

Since I am neither a native English speaker nor a poet, an exercise such as the above will be viewed with justified scepticism. My aim, however, was to try to show that the translator should play with his language and not be afraid to experiment with words, trying to capture something of the simple conciseness of the Hebrew poetry, and in this way transfer the poetry of the source text into poetry in translation. Others will surely do much better in this, and I hope they too will try, each one for his own language.

JAN P. STERK

FOCUS ON TRANSLATORS

The following contribution has been provided by Rev. Hermogenes Ugang and Dr Daud Soesilo of the Indonesian Bible Society. It deals with a question which is important for translators in a number of languages.

-Editor

Are Honorific Terms of Address Necessary in the Indonesian Bible?

The question of honorific terms of address for God in the Indonesian Bible has been raised by some friends of the Bible following the launching of the New Translation New Testament in 1971.

In response to this new publication, one Christian from East Java wrote to the Indonesian Bible Society (IBS): "Shouldn't we use *Yehowa* 'Jehovah' or *Tuhan* 'Lord' instead of *Engkau* 'you', *-Mu* (objective 'you' or possessive 'your') in referring to God? Although in Indonesian there is no equivalent of the English 'thee' and 'thine' used in the King James Version, or the Dutch *U* (in contrast to *jij*), we ought to do something to show more respect to God." He did not realize that *Engkau* is the equivalent of "thou/thee" as second person pronoun singular, even though the plural form "you" has now replaced "thou" as the singular, which was originally used as an honorific. When the complete Bible in the New Translation (TB) was published in 1974, the pronouns for God were still second person pronouns, *Engkau* or *-Mu*, and third person pronouns *Dia* or *-Nya*.

This same person sent IBS a stronger criticism when the Indonesian Common Language Translation (BIS) was released in 1985. He found it unacceptable that the BIS Bible continues to use *engkau*, *-mu* "you or your", *nya* "he, him or his." And worse still BIS does not capitalize the pronouns for God. Other people also wrote and questioned whether the IBS had paid attention to the use of honorific terms of address in the Indonesian Bible translation. The criticism now is not only against the absence of honorific terms of address for God and Jesus, but also against the nature of the translation itself. Indonesian speakers of Javanese background are sincerely concerned that the BIS Bible will downgrade the

value of the Bible as the word of God. Another man contended that this Bible translation lost not only every respect for God but also failed to meet the need of the Indonesian Christian community, since it is modelled on the English Good News Bible (GNB or TEV). The discussion here, however, will be limited to the issue of honorific terms of address.

The challenge

One of our priorities in translation is to transfer the source language meaning into the most common and natural Indonesian, and this is done in order to meet the needs of our target audience. Therefore the question of using honorific terms of address in the Indonesian Bible translation can not easily be avoided, since this is one of the cultural values in the language.

There were once several kingdoms in different parts of Indonesia that maintained honorific terms of address. Most of the descendants of those kings do not have any official power in modern Indonesia. Some, however, still preserve certain ceremonial functions. In particular, the influence of the Hindu caste system is still reflected in the levels of language found in regional languages such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and Sasak. The influence of the Javanese *kraton* "palace" life is also quite apparent. In spite of the fact that the sultans in the courts of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java are given only local authority by the central government in Jakarta, their status has a great impact upon the people in Central Java. Thus it is still relevant to use the traditional honorific terms of address. Realizing that the people who live on the island of Java comprise 60% of the total Indonesian population, it is apparent that their cultural values and linguistic tradition will have great influence on the national language Bahasa Indonesia.

In the long run it is the Indonesian public who will have to determine whether or not honorific terms of address are relevant. As we know, Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) is based on Riau Malay, which has been influenced to a considerable effect by Javanese. And Javanese is spoken by the majority of the people in Indonesia. (It is worth pointing out that there are more Javanese speakers than all the speakers of French combined.) The influence of Javanese on Indonesian, as studied in considerable detail by Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo, shows us that Javanization of the Indonesian language has been going on since the sixteenth century. Due to limited space, we can only mention briefly the levels of speech in Javanese and their impact on the use of honorific terms of address in Indonesian.

Generally speaking, there are three main levels of speech in Javanese:

- 1) the **KROMO**, which is the formal level,
- 2) the **MADYO**, the intermediate level,
- 3) the **NGOKO**, the informal level.

The choice of one of these levels is determined by such factors as the relative status of the speaker and the person addressed, their relative ages, to what degree they are acquainted to each other, and, within families, the relative generation to which they belong. **KROMO** level may be divided into two, namely **KROMO INGGIL** which is used to show respect to a person, his

possessions, action, or speech, and **KROMO ANDAP** which is used to show the humbleness of a person, her possessions and actions, relative to the person addressed or to a respected third party.

Each of these levels of speech has its own set of nouns, pronouns, verbs, and other parts of speech. Anyone can use **KROMO** words to his or her addressee. However, if the addressee holds a respectable position in society such as President, Governor or any other higher ranking offices, the **KROMO** forms of address must be used by the speaker, regardless of which of the three main levels the speaker is using otherwise. **KROMO** level is used to show respect by the speaker to the addressee, and this will in effect set a sense of distance between the speaker and the addressee. For instance, in Javanese it is possible to use the following pronouns, depending on the respective levels: *dalem*, *kulo* or *aku* (meaning "I"); *panjenengan*, *sampeyan*, or *kowe* (meaning "you"). With this frame of mind, Javanese speakers will always try to find Indonesian equivalents of Javanese **KROMO** terms when addressing God. Unfortunately, Indonesian does not have equivalents for all three Javanese levels. There are two common Indonesian words for "you" namely *engkau* (second person singular) and *kamu* (second person plural, or second person singular as a term of respect in some circles). In the more recent development of Indonesian, *anda* and *kalian* have been adopted as second person pronouns singular and plural respectively.

Lacking the exact Indonesian equivalent for the Javanese **KROMO** term *panjenengan* "you", Javanese Indonesians will use terms of address such as *Bapak* "father", *Ibu* "mother", *Tuan* "master", or *Nyonya* "madam" to show respect. One can also use *saudara* "brother" (an equivalent for the Javanese kinship terms *mas* "brother" or *mbak* "sister"). No Javanese will ever use the pronouns *engkau* or *kamu* "you" (or *-mu* objective "you" or possessive "your") to address a second person who has a higher status or is older than the speaker.

With this perspective Indonesians of Javanese background feel uneasy when *engkau* and *-mu* are used to address God or Jesus. These pronouns do not convey for them the sense of honour and respect due to God. To a certain extent the pronoun *anda* "you" gives more of a sense of respect than *engkau* and *kamu*. Nevertheless they prefer to use *Tuhan* "Lord", or in certain circles *Yehowa* "Jehovah", in addressing God, both in personal prayer and in public worship. This is also true in the use of the third person singular pronoun *dia* "he/she", and *-nya* objective "him/her" or possessive "his/her" in referring to God. They believe that by addressing God as "Lord" (in Javanese *Gusti*, *Pangeran*), they will render God the proper respect that is due to the Almighty. In fact there are some groups which insist that they should use these terms of reference whenever they read or mention the names of *Allah* "God" and *Yesus* "Jesus"—*Tuhan Allah* (Javanese *Gusti Allah*) and *Tuhan Yesus* (Javanese *Gusti Yesus*).

For Javanese speakers, **NGOKO** reflects a sense of intimacy between the speaker and the addressee. In contrast to the use of **KROMO**, it does not set a sense of distance. Intimate friends will use **NGOKO** to each other. And people of higher social status may use this level to be treated respectfully

as they are mingling with those of lower social status. This means that an employer is entitled to use *NGOKO* to his employee, or a teacher to his student, or a father to his children. It is also acceptable for a husband to use *NGOKO* with his wife, and vice versa, and between brothers and sisters. But children are not supposed to use *NGOKO* with their parents or their uncle or aunt; likewise daughters/sons-in-law are not supposed to use *NGOKO* with their fathers/mothers-in-law. While *NGOKO* can be used in a time of anger, *KROMO* can not.

Javanese speakers believe that *NGOKO* is not supposed to be used in our communication with God. The level of divine speech is even higher than that of *KROMO*, just as there are higher levels used in reference to sultans in the courts. However, there are no equivalents of these Javanese levels in the Indonesian language. Soepomo Poedjosoedarmo pointed out that there are 260 roots in Javanese *KROMO INGGIL* and *KROMO ANDAP* vocabulary, while in Indonesian there are only 70 roots, which are largely borrowed from Javanese. The consequence of this for Bible translation will be, among other things, to utilize some pronouns or terms of address which are similar to Javanese *KROMO*. This is what the Indonesian Bible friends of court-oriented background would like the IBS to do.

A response

First of all, one important principle of translation is that what is heard is more important than what is written; this is one reason why we do not normally capitalize the pronouns for God. Moreover in the original languages of the Bible, there is no capitalization for these pronouns. However, the IBS has agreed to capitalize the pronouns for God in the next edition of the Indonesian BIS Bible. This is also in line with the Indonesian official spelling guide which requires that pronouns for God be spelled with capital letters.

Secondly, in the present edition of the Indonesian BIS Bible the honorific term of address *Pak Guru* "Sir" or "Mister Teacher" is already applied to Jesus. This is a much better equivalent than the literal rendering *Guru* "Teacher" which is quite an unnatural term of address in Indonesian. On the other hand, it will be unfaithful to the original text to consistently address Jesus as *Tuhan* "Lord" in the Gospels, when the original does not do this. The term "Lord" is used sparingly of Jesus in the Gospel accounts before his death and resurrection, but it is applied more regularly to the risen Christ in the rest of the New Testament. A faithful translation must somehow reflect this understanding and not obscure it for whatever reason.

Furthermore, speakers of the Indonesian national language come from the background of hundreds of regional languages which do not have honorific levels of address like those in Javanese. Therefore Bible translation in the national language has to take into account other speakers and readers of this translation. For instance, in Sumatra and Kalimantan people can use the pronoun *aku* "I" in a conversation with their parents. It is also proper to use the pronoun *kamu* "you" among peers. This is similar to the situation in East Malaysia where it is quite acceptable to

use *kamu* to address someone who is older or of higher status than the speaker. Another practical consideration is whether Jesus has a higher or lower status relative to a person like Pontius Pilate. Should Jesus use the equivalent of *NGOKO* or *KROMO* to Pilate? And how will people feel if Pilate uses the equivalent of *NGOKO* in his encounter with Jesus?

Jus Badudu, one of the outstanding Indonesian linguists from the island of Sulawesi, states that the personal pronouns *engkau* and *kamu* "you" and *aku* "I" are not necessarily impolite or disrespectful. They are in fact pronouns of intimacy expressing a close relationship between the speaker and the addressee. He will not hesitate to use *engkau* or *kamu* to someone if he or she is an intimate friend with whom he has a very close relationship. And he will refer to himself as *aku* in a conversation with an addressee who he thinks of as a close friend. That is the reason why we can use the pronouns *engkau* "you" or *-mu* "you/your" or *-nya* "him/his" when we address God. Citing the absence of special honorific pronouns for God in Arabic, Badudu justifies the use of the common Indonesian pronouns including *Engkau*, *-Mu*, *Dia*, *-Nya* for God in religious contexts. As a matter of fact, Indonesian Christians as well as Muslims address God as *Engkau* in their prayers. Badudu reminds us, however, that in order to show respect and honor to God we should capitalize the pronouns *Engkau*, *-Mu* and *-Nya* for God.

In fact today's young people who are educated in the urban context take less care in their old tradition of using different levels of language relative to the status and seniority of the people they address. Those growing up in the metropolis even have difficulty in keeping up with their mother tongues such as Javanese and Sundanese, and prefer to converse with each other in the national language.

The uncertain future

Given that the Indonesian language has long been influenced by Javanese, there are two possible ways that Bahasa Indonesia may go in the future. On the one hand, it seems likely that Javanese will continue to fix its thought pattern in the Indonesian language. But on the other hand, it is inevitable that the younger generation will more and more ignore language levels and honorific terms of address. The more democratic and informal form of language may gradually prevail, whereas *KROMO* forms will be used less and less. These two possibilities are by no means without reasons; there are forces at work in support of each.

On the one hand, under the leadership of two successive Javanese presidents, the Indonesian government has been campaigning to revive Indonesian cultural heritage and customs including those of language tradition. Anyone visiting our national library in Jakarta will find out that many writings on the Javanese language have been published and probably will be translated into Indonesian for public reading and study. In addition, the presence of the two Central Javanese *kraton* courts are living evidence of the Indonesian traditional culture. Certainly these courts are powerful representatives of old Javanese kingdoms which have been transmitting the

old Javanese civilization and ideals into modern Indonesia, either directly or indirectly.

On the other hand, the Indonesian government has introduced and promoted modern science and technology as well as many global ideas to the general populace. These ideas are elements working to bring a new dimension in the Indonesian way of thinking. The idea of global society and global community may in turn tend to make Indonesians give up something of their old culture including their traditional language levels and honorific terms of address. On the national scene, many Javanese students are more comfortable using Indonesian with their non-Javanese fellow students from different parts of Indonesia. Moreover, the Bataks of Sumatra, the Dayaks from Kalimantan, and the Manadonese from Sulawesi, to name only a few, have no tradition of language levels in their respective languages; therefore they will use Indonesian without reference to the concerns of those of court background.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the IBS has been receiving many positive comments from Indonesian young people and students who have by and large responded favourably to the BIS Bible. As a matter of fact this year the IBS will publish a Student's Bible edition in Today's Indonesian Version (BIS) at their own request.

Conclusion

Since there are two possible directions that the Indonesian language may take, there may also be two possible ways of translating the Bible into Indonesian in the future. The first option is to comply with the wish for honorific terms of address for God and Jesus. The second is to retain the existing translation as it is, especially in the common language translation. Jus Badudu is right when he points out that the use of *Engkau*, *-Mu*, *Dia* and *-Nya* for God indicates our sense of intimacy with God. But this is in keeping with the New Testament, in which we find Jesus saying, "...I call you friends because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (Jn 15.15). There are also references in Is 41.8 and Jas 2.23 to Abraham being called a friend of God, showing his close relationship with God.

HOW WAS THAT?

Finding appropriate terms for the clothing worn by people in the Bible is often difficult for translators, and sometimes readers find the terms used very funny.

In John 20.12 the Greek text says that the two angels were "in white" meaning that their clothes were white. The actual garments which they were wearing are not named.

In one language the angels were said to be dressed in "white shirts", which could also have meant "white clothes", but which suggested to readers that they were wearing shirts but no trousers!