

Ex 3.14-15 is concerned. The present rendering of these verses is much to be preferred. But in the light of our discussion here, we feel the present GNB text could be improved significantly in several ways. First of all, the phrase in verse 14b, "The one who is called I AM", should be changed to "The one who calls himself I AM". Then in verse 15b, the pronoun "This" should be changed to "the LORD" (or to "Yahweh") since the average reader will not understand the demonstrative to be pointing to the name rendered in 15a as "the LORD". The present footnote for verse 14 should be divided into two, with the second part identified by a raised letter placed in verse 15 after "the LORD". And finally, the two final clauses in verse 15 should be set off in poetic format. This is easily seen as an intended couplet from the Hebrew.

The GNB text for verses 14-15 would then read as follows:

¹⁴God said, "I am who I am. You must tell them: 'The one who calls himself I AM^c has sent me to you.' ¹⁵Tell the Israelites that I, the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, have sent you to them.

'The LORD^f is my name forever;
this is what all future generations are to call me.' "

And the footnotes would read as follows:

^cI am who I am . . . I AM; *or* I will be who I will be . . . I WILL BE.

^f*The Hebrew name Yahweh, traditionally transliterated as Jehovah, sounds like the Hebrew for I AM. In this translation it is represented by "the LORD" in capital letters, following a usage which is widespread in English versions.*

ROBERT KOOPS

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS AND IMPLIED MEANING IN THE BOOK OF JOB

Robert Koops is a UBS Translation Adviser based in the United States

Whenever I read the Book of Job, even in a modern English translation, I find myself muttering, "Now what's he driving at?" or "What's that got to do with the last thing he said?" Even when

individual sentences are clear (which is often not the case), the direction or “gist” of paragraphs and sections may be obscure.

If I as a first-language speaker of English find it so, I feel concerned for translators who use English as a basis for their work, and for whom English is a second language. But in recent years studies in new areas of linguistic research promise to provide some help in sorting out the problems for readers in texts like the Book of Job. These include:

- studies of the background knowledge of speakers and hearers, including cultural assumptions
- studies of the strategies or methods that readers and hearers use in understanding texts
- studies of how the intentions of speakers and writers are reflected in the structure of their texts
- studies of what readers expect because of their familiarity with other texts of the same type
- studies of “speech acts”, meaning what a speaker is trying to do by means of speaking.

Each of these, in one way or another, involves **implicature** of some kind, that is, the links and connections within a text which are not stated plainly in words. It is that topic that we will focus on in this article.

Application to the Book of Job

We take for our study a sample from the second round of the debate in the Book of Job. In the first round, Job has denied the accusations of his so-called “friends”, defended his integrity, and ended with a discourse on the weakness of human beings. Now the three friends renew the attack, each attack being followed by a rebuttal from Job.

In the following presentation, we give the text in four versions: the **Revised Standard Version (RSV)**, a text which preserves the sentence structure and rhetorical devices of the Hebrew fairly formally; the **Jerusalem Bible (JB)**; the **Good News Bible (GNB)**, a translation based on the principles of “common language” and “functional equivalence”; and the **Living Bible (LB)**, also functional equivalence but more idiomatic and more free with the text. Space does not permit us to present three others: the **New English Bible (NEB)**, **New International Version (NIV)**, and the **Berkeley or Modern Language Translation (MLT)**, although all are included in the discussion.

Our procedure is, first, to determine the speech devices used and get “behind them” to the basic information. Then we determine the implications, the force of the way the speaker expresses himself (if it is not evident), and the “pointing” material which, in normal conversational discourse, serves to give the participants their “bearings”.

The limitations of space permit us to deal with only a few of the jewels we find in this text. There are numerous other points at which implicature creates problems of understanding in the text; we will focus in particular on the implicature of rhetorical questions. For a start, let us note how the communicational situation is depicted (Job 15.1):

RSV

¹Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:

JB

The Second Series of Speeches

¹Eliphaz of Teman spoke next. He said:

GNB

The Second Dialogue

Eliphaz

LB

¹THE ANSWER OF *Eliphaz the Temanite*:

In the Hebrew text, the speaker is named, but not the person addressed. RSV and LB, by using the word “answer”, indicate that a verbal exchange is going on. NIV, NEB, and MLT also follow this tack. GNB puts the material into the form of a heading. JB does both. Only GNB indicates the person addressed (see verse 2, below). As the previous reference to Job is three chapters back, this is a useful adjustment in the interest of clarity. In fact, as the “speeches” are, in general, very long, it would be effective for communication to refer to the person addressed by name in the text periodically.

We come, in verses 2-3, to examples of the most prominent rhetorical features in the Book of Job, namely parallelism and rhetorical questions.

RSV

²Should a wise man answer with windy knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind?

³Should he argue in unprofitable talk, or in words with which he can do no good?

JB

²Does a wise man answer with airy reasonings, or feed himself on an east wind?

³Does he defend himself with empty talk and ineffectual wordiness?

GNB

¹⁻²Empty words, Job! Empty words!

³No wise man would talk the way you do or defend himself with such meaningless words.

LB

²You are supposed to be a wise man, and yet you give us all this foolish talk. You are nothing but a windbag.

³It isn't right to speak so foolishly. What good do such words do?

In terms of communication, the parallelism may provide useful redundancy—unless, of course, readers are unused to such a feature in discourse. In such a case, they may look for some new and different meaning in the second line of the pair.

Rhetorical questions (RQs from now on) present a more difficult problem, as they are often ambiguous and are used in different ways in different languages.

First, let us examine briefly how rhetorical questions involve “implicature”.

According to Levinson (*Pragmatics*, page 110), RQs represent an example of implicature generated by the flouting of one of the “maxims” of human verbal interaction, namely the maxim of “sincerity” or “quality”. Briefly stated, this maxim says that the speaker must be sincere to “play the game”; no lies, no made-up claims. In an ordinary conversation, then, a question is assumed to be a request for information. When it becomes evident to the hearer that the “information” in question is already well known to both of them, he understands that the speaker must be deliberately flouting the expected pattern, and thereby doing something else, namely emphasizing a point. In translation such an emphasis may need to be expressed in some languages as a strong affirmative. That is what is attempted in GNB and LB in verses 2-3 above, whereas all the rest preserve the RQ form. (Note that GNB also expresses the metaphor in plain language and brings “wise man” down from verse 2 into verse 3.)

We skip here the implications of the conjunctions in verses 4-5 and move on to the rhetorical questions in verses 7-9.

RSV

⁷Are you the first man that was born? Or were you brought forth from the hills?

⁸Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself?

⁹What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not clear to us?

GNB

⁷Do you think you were the first man born? Were you there when God made the mountains?

⁸Did you overhear the plans God made? Does human wisdom belong to you alone?

⁹There is nothing you know that we don't know.

JB

⁷Are you the first-born of the human race, brought into the world before the hills?

⁸Have you been a listener at God's council or established a monopoly of wisdom?

⁹What knowledge have you that we have not, what understanding that is not ours too?

LB

^{7,8}Are you the wisest man alive? Were you born before the hills were made?

Have you heard the secret counsel of God? Are you called into his counsel room? Do you have a monopoly on wisdom?

⁹What do you know more than we do? What do you understand that we don't?

Of the six RQs here, all are preserved intact in NIV, JB, NEB, MLT, and LB. GNB converts the last two to a statement. Stating the meaning of these sentences in other words, we get the following:

(7) You are not the first man born.
You were not born before the hills.

(8) You have not listened in God's council.
You limit wisdom to yourself.

(9) You know nothing that we don't know.

Let us now examine these "converted RQs" a little more deeply. The implications are stated in the right-hand column:

(7) You are not the first man born. You were not born before the hills.	you are young
(8) You have not listened in God's council. You limit wisdom to yourself.	you are ignorant
(9) You know nothing that we don't know.	you consider yourself wise we know more than you do

Verse 10, dropping the RQ, carries on the same theme:

RSV

¹⁰Both the grey-haired and the aged are among us, older than your father.

JB

¹⁰A grey-haired man, and an ancient, are of our number; these have seen more summers than your father.

GNB

¹⁰We learned our wisdom from gray-haired men—men born before your father.

LB

¹⁰On our side are aged men much older than your father.

The statements here are at the same level as our "transformations" of verses 7-9. The implication is: "We are old" which balances "you are young" above (7).

At this point we can detect a still deeper level of inference in the text—a level which, depending on the intended readers or hearers, could be brought out in translation. By saying "You are young" (7), the Hebrew cultural background almost certainly supplies "You are foolish" (note LB verse 7). Likewise, "We are old" (verse 10) implies: "We are wise." An adequate translation of this into any language should be based on an understanding of whether or not the linkage between old age and wisdom is culturally assumed.

Further, "You consider yourself the only wise person" (8) implies "You're proud" and probably "You think we're stupid."

Furthermore, in both references to the age factor (verses 7 and 10)

there is the inference: "(Since we are wise and you are foolish) you ought to listen to us." Most translators, however, are not comfortable with putting such implied material into words in their text.

We have noted here that there are different levels, or stages, of implied meaning. We could perhaps describe them as follows:

- (1) the **rhetorical**, in which the negative-positive polarity is reversed
- (2) the **conventional**, in which a connection is made between a physical state (old or young), or an attitude (you limit wisdom to yourself) and a mental state (wise, foolish, or proud)
- (3) the **pragmatic**, in which the conclusion is drawn that certain behavior should follow from certain conditions.

It is possible that this "layering" of implied meaning accounts for much of the difficulty in the Book of Job.

We continue with more RQs in verses 11-13.

RSV

¹¹ Are the consolations of God too small for you, or the word that deals gently with you?

¹² Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash,

¹³ that you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth?

GNB

¹¹ God offers you comfort; why still reject it? We have spoken for him with calm, even words.

¹² But you are excited and glare at us in anger.

¹³ You are angry with God and denounce him.

JB

¹¹ Do you scorn the comfort that God gives, and the moderation we have used in speaking?

¹² See how passion carries you away! How evil you look,

¹³ when you thus loose your anger on God and utter speeches such as these!

LB

¹¹ Is God's comfort too little for you? Is his gentleness too rough?

¹² What is this you are doing, getting carried away by your anger, with flashing eyes?

¹³ And you turn against God and say all these things against him.

The major translations preserve the double RQ form in verse 11, although GNB splits the first part and converts the second part to a statement. At least two layers of implied meaning are present here:

- (1) The consolations of God are too small for you.
- (2) You reject God's consolations.

Here Eliphaz accuses Job of rejecting God's comfort. The conventional interpretation is: "You are proud". Such an implication could be stated plainly in a translation such as the following:

Tell me, Job, are you too proud to receive the consolation God offers you?

or, transforming the RQ to a statement,

Job, you're just too proud to receive comfort from God.

In verse 12 the arguments continue, this time expressed in idiom ("Your heart carries you away") and a culturally significant act ("Your eyes flash"). It is perhaps this extra rhetorical load that persuaded the GNB translators to convert the RQs to statements:

. . . you are excited and glare at us in anger

whereas LB transforms the RQ thus:

What is this that you are doing, getting carried away by your anger, with flashing eyes?

and JB uses an exclamatory sentence:

See how passion carries you away! How evil you look . . .

Eliphaz now makes an assertion about human morality:

RSV

¹⁴What is man, that he can be clean? Or he that is born of a woman, that he can be righteous?

JB

¹⁴How can any man be clean? Born of woman, can he ever be good?

GNB

¹⁴Can any man be really pure? Can anyone be right with God?

LB

¹⁴What man in all the earth can be as pure and righteous as you claim to be?

Once again we have ambiguous RQs. All the versions have preserved the RQ form however, perhaps because the question is answered in verses 15-16 with a resounding "No!" When the first layer of implied meaning is "peeled off", the result (No one is perfect) carries a further implication: "and that includes you, Job". Beyond that, we detect yet another: "You claim to be perfect". Note that LB expresses the the inner implication in words in its text.

We pass over a routine piece of implicature involving "not even . . . much less" in verses 15-16, and a statement about the fate of godless people, in order to consider Job's reply to Eliphaz in chapter 16.

RSV

¹Then Job answered:

²I have heard many such things; miserable comforters are you all.

³Shall windy words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer?

GNB

¹⁻²I have heard words like that before; the comfort you give is only torment.

³Are you going to keep on talking forever? Do you always have to have the last word?

JB

¹Job spoke next. He said:

²How often have I heard all this before! What sorry comforters you are!

³Is there never to be an end of airy words? What a plague your need to have the last word is!

LB

¹JOB'S REPLY:

²I have heard all this before. What miserable comforters all of you are.

³Won't you ever stop your flow of foolish words? What have I said that makes you speak so endlessly?

Note the levels of implied meaning in the first part of verse 2:

- (1) I've heard such things before.
- (2) Your words are not new.
- (3) Your words are not helping me.

It is easy to see how at the third level, the meaning becomes more obviously parallel to the second part of the verse: "Miserable comforters are you all" (that is, your "comfort" is ineffective).

The following verse (3) breaks down as follows:

- (1) Shall windy words have an end?
- (2) Your windy words seem to be endless.
- (3) You're going on and on and it is useless.

A further level probably is: "I don't like it", and/or "I wish you would quit."

In the second part of verse 3 it is instructive to note the variation between JB and GNB.

JB: What a plague your need to have the last word is!

GNB: Do you always have to have the last word?

Conclusion

The Book of Job illustrates the wide variety of rhetorical devices and discourse features that are present in many of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Translating these devices literally may give us a picture of the way the Hebrew writers used language, but for many readers much of the meaning is lost because their own literary tradition uses different devices (or the same devices for different ends). It may also be true that the use of literary devices in drastically different frequencies creates loss of impact because of differences in expectations. Finally, loss of meaning and impact may be due to the inability of readers to pick out the "thread of discourse" due to the heavy use of rhetorical devices and sheer length of text.

GRAHAM S. OGDEN

TRANSLATION PROBLEMS IN ECCLESIASTES 5.13-17

The Rev. Dr Graham Ogden is a UBS Translation Consultant based in Taipei

The first and most basic step in any translation task is to understand the meaning of the text to be translated. In this brief article I wish to address the problem of meaning in Ec 5.13-17 and thus look at the way in which we might improve our translations of those verses.

The problem

The specific problem in Ec 5.13-17 lies in identifying the referents of the third person pronouns. If we are to translate the passage adequately we must first establish who is being referred to by these pronouns, then make that clear in the translation.

Commentators are divided in their opinion about who is the main subject of verses 14-16: for some it is the father who is being referred to, while for others it is the son who is born to the rich man. Translations generally have found it easier to leave the question unanswered, so they have not made clear who the subject is. GNB has taken the view that in verses 15-17, "he" is "everyman" and so has consistently translated the pronoun "he" as "we" or "our".

The text

From the following quotations we can see how two basic English translations have dealt with the third person singular masculine pronouns in this passage.