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THE COMMUNICABILITY OF TAGALOG TRANSLATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES¹

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Part 1: Accuracy

(The Three Basic Components of Communication)

Use of the Word "Communication"

A couple of generations ago the word "communication" was used almost exclusively to refer to a written message sent in the form of a letter, or else to a message sent by telegraph or telephone. The development of radio and television as media of mass communication has resulted in the study of how such electronic communications systems work, especially as compared with the human brain and nervous system. From this new science of cybernetics there has come a new understanding of the phenomenon of communication, together with a new set of terms to describe it, terms such as channel, signal, noise, and feedback.

What Communication Is

Communication has been defined as "a procedure by which source and receptor are related through the instrument of a message".² The "message" includes the signal, or the symbols and arrangement of symbols which constitute the formal features of the message, and also the content or meaning of the signal. In human speech, the signal consists of vocal sounds arranged and combined according to the patterns of a particular language. In writing, these arrangements and combinations of sounds are represented, often imperfectly, by the use of letters, words, and punctuation marks. The "source" is the producer of the message (the speaker or writer) who selects the topic or conception to be communicated, encodes this conception into appropriate symbols, and transmits them. The "receptor" (the hearer or reader) is the one who receives the signal, decodes or interprets it, and responds to it.³

¹ This is a condensation of a Ph.D. thesis of the same title submitted by the writer to the School of Education of New York University in 1967. The subtitle of the thesis is: "A Comparison of the Accuracy, Naturalness, and Readability of 1933 and 1966 Translations of the New Testament in Tagalog." This is the first of three articles to appear in *The Bible Translator*. Ed.

² Eugene A. Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating* (Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1964), p. 7.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-3.

Translation as Communication

As stated in the Guide for Translators and Revisers of the Holy Scriptures, translation is “a process of communicating in the ‘receptor’ language (the language into which a translation is made) a message which has been given in the ‘source’ language (the language from which a translation is made)”.⁴ The Guide goes on to say that “the objective of such communication is that the hearer or reader of the message in the receptor language may comprehend it as nearly as possible in the same sense as those who received it in the source language”.⁵ The extent to which this objective is achieved determines pretty much the kind of translation which is produced. A “formal-equivalence” translation, on the one hand, is “basically source-oriented; that is, it is designed to reveal as much as possible of the form and content of the original message”.⁶ This type of translation attempts to reproduce in the receptor language the words, grammatical forms, and syntactic constructions of the source language. A “dynamic-equivalence” translation, on the other hand, is oriented toward the receptor response. It attempts to render in the receptor language “the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message”.⁷

Areas of Communicability

The communicability of a particular translation, that is, its ability to communicate in the receptor language the message which has been given in the source language, includes three basic areas corresponding to the three basic components of communication. The first of these is accuracy, or the degree to which the translation communicates the same message, first as concerns the meaning and second as concerns the form. The second area is naturalness, or the degree to which the expressions used in the translation conform to the normal usage of the language. This has to do with the encoding of the *message*. The third area is readability, or the degree to which the readers of the translation understand it in the same sense as those who received it in the source language. This area, of course, has to do with the *receptors*.

Application to Tagalog Translations of the New Testament

The writer has attempted to apply these three areas or facets of communicability as criteria for making a comparison between two translations of the New Testament in Tagalog prepared under the auspices of the American and Philippine Bible Societies. Tagalog, the national language of the Philippines, is a language belonging to the Malayo-Polynesian language group. It is spoken as a first language by approximately six million people living in Central Luzon, in the area surrounding the city of Manila.⁸ It is spoken as a second language by millions of persons living throughout the Philippines.

⁴ “A Guide for Translators and Revisers of the Holy Scriptures”, prepared by the Translations Department of the American Bible Society, 1959, p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Nida, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁸ *Census of the Philippines: 1960—Population and Housing* (Manila: Bureau of Census and Statistics, 1963), Vol. II, p. 15.

The two Tagalog translations chosen for comparison are the translation of the New Testament published by the American Bible Society in 1933⁹ and a revised translation of the New Testament which has been in preparation in Manila since 1955 and which is currently being sponsored by the Philippine Bible Society with the cooperation of both Protestant and Roman Catholic translators. The former is referred to in this series of articles as “the 1933 translation”; and the latter as “the 1966 translation” since, although it has not yet been published as a complete New Testament, portions of it were published in 1966 in substantially the form which was used in the comparison made with the 1933 translation.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO TRANSLATIONS FOR ACCURACY

Selection of New Testament Passages

In order to compare the two translations for accuracy, eight passages of about 200 words in length were selected at random from eight different classifications of New Testament passages based on major groupings of New Testament books and major types of literary composition. Care was taken that each passage should constitute a literary unit, consisting of one or more paragraphs of consecutive text dealing with the same or related subject matter.¹⁰ The following chart gives the number, source, literary type, and inclusive references for the eight New Testament passages selected:

No.	Source	Literary Type	Inclusive References
1	Synoptic Gospels	Conversational Narrative	Mark 12: 28–34
2	Synoptic Gospels	Informal Discourse	Matt. 21: 33–41
3	Gospel of John	Narrative-Discourse	John 6: 5–13
4	Book of Acts	Historical Narrative	Acts 10: 34–41
5	Pauline Letters	Formal Essay	1 Cor. 10: 1–11
6	Pauline Letters	Formal Prescriptive	Rom. 14: 1–9
7	General Letters	Informal Prescriptive	1 John 2: 1–8
8	Revelation	Figurative	Rev. 1: 12–20

Analysis and Translation of the Greek Text

An analysis of the Greek text of each of these eight New Testament passages was made, including a brief discussion of the principal textual variants and a verse-by-verse exegesis of the text.¹¹ Based on this analysis,

⁹ *Ang Bagong Tipan ng ating Panginoon at Tagapagligtas na si Jesu-cristo* (Manila: American Bible Society, 1933). This is a corrected edition of the New Testament in Tagalog published under the same title in 1930, based in part on two previous translations of the New Testament in Tagalog published by the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1902 and 1911.

¹⁰ This was necessary because the “cloze” procedure adopted for use as a measurement of readability can be used only with contextually interrelated material.

¹¹ New Testament source materials used in this analysis included Greek-English lexicons; Greek grammars; Bible dictionaries; exegetical commentaries based on the Greek text; and modern translations of the New Testament.

there was prepared for each passage a "literal transfer" or interlinear word-for-word transliteration from Greek to English, employing as much as possible corresponding English lexical units without making any alterations in word order, grammatical constructions, or parts of speech. From these literal transfers, "minimal transfer translations" were produced by making only such alterations as were necessary to conform to the obligatory categories of English.¹² Both the literal transfers and the minimal transfer translations were submitted to a panel of Greek scholars for their review and correction.

Translation of the Tagalog Texts

Before a comparison could be made between the two Tagalog translations and the Greek text of the New Testament passages, it was necessary also to produce literal transfers and minimal transfer translations from Tagalog to English for the Tagalog texts of the same passages. These were, in turn, submitted to a panel of Tagalog informants who were selected on the basis of their competence in both languages and experience in interpreting or translating from one language to the other.¹³ They were asked to review the literal transfers and minimal transfer translations from Tagalog to English and make any corrections they thought should be made.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO TRANSLATIONS FOR FIDELITY IN FORM

Line-up of Literal Transfers by Syntactic Units

The literal transfers made from the two Tagalog texts were then compared with the literal transfers made from the Greek text, in the following manner. First, the text was divided into manageable syntactic units which could be accommodated on a single line. Then the literal transfer of each syntactic unit of the Greek text, of the 1933 Tagalog text, and of the 1966 Tagalog text were placed on three successive lines, with care being taken to arrange the corresponding lexical units directly above or below one another. In this way it was possible to see at a glance the similarities and differences among the three transfers.

Types of Changes

Attention was given to four types of changes made in either of the Tagalog texts as compared with the Greek text: (1) transpositions, or changes in the order of words or groups of words; (2) omissions; (3) additions; and (4) structural alterations, or changes in lexical meaning, grammatical form, or syntactic construction.¹⁴ These four kinds of changes were marked on the literal transfers from Tagalog to English by the use of four symbols or mechanical devices. (1) Transpositions were indicated by an ellipsis, a series

¹² See Nida, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

¹³ All of these were college graduates who were active in translating church materials, but none of them had served in any capacity in the translation or revision of the New Testament.

¹⁴ Cf. Nida, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-92.

of three spaced dots (. . .) inserted in place of the transposed word or group of words, and the word or group of words was enclosed in brackets. (2) Omissions were indicated by inserting a space marker (≠) at the point where the omission had occurred. (3) Additions were indicated by the use of an asterisk (*) following the added word or phrase. (4) Structural alterations were indicated by underlining the word or words affected.

A Sample Line-Up

The following sample shows how the three literal transfers of Matt. 21: 36b were lined up and how the four kinds of changes were indicated. The three lines represent the literal transfer made from the Greek text, from the 1933 Tagalog translation, and from the 1966 Tagalog translation.

and	did-they	to-them	likewise/in-the-same- manner.
and	was-done ≠	also* to them	fm like-that also--co way.
and . . . fm	was-done <u>by pl tenant</u>	to <u>pl that</u> .	[like-that also]

A number of symbols in this sample need explanation. Single hyphens are used to join two or more English words needed to translate one Greek or Tagalog word. The double hyphen serves the same function, but also indicates that the Tagalog word transliterated in this way contains two morphemes, the second of which appears in another form as a separate word. The slanted line indicates that the two English expressions thus divided are alternative translations of the same Greek word. Three abbreviations are used in this illustration: *fm* stands for focus marker; *co* for connector; and *pl* for plural. The space marker in the second line indicates that this Tagalog translation has no equivalent for the pronoun “they”. The asterisk following the word “also” indicates that this word was added in this Tagalog translation. The ellipsis in the third line, together with the use of brackets around “like-that also”, indicates that those words have been transposed in that Tagalog translation. Finally, the underlining of two expressions on this line indicate structural changes. In the one case, this translation has substituted a noun for a pronoun; in the other, it has substituted a demonstrative for a personal pronoun.

STATISTICAL COMPARISON OF ALTERATIONS

Enumeration of Alterations

An enumeration was made of the four kinds of alterations marked in the literal transfers from both Tagalog translations. The results of this enumeration are given in the following table.

It may be seen from this table that the 1966 translation has a greater number of additions in five passages; the 1933 translation has a greater number in the other three passages. The 1966 translation has a greater number of omissions in six passages; the two translations have the same number in the other two passages. The 1966 translation has a greater number of transpositions in four passages; the 1933 translation has a greater number

	Additions		Omissions		Trans-positions		Structural Alterations	
	1933	1966	1933	1966	1933	1966	1933	1966
	Passage 1	7	15	8	5	5	5	15
Passage 2	9	3	7	7	7	9	19	37
Passage 3	4	16	1	13	6	5	12	19
Passage 4	6	18	0	6	5	8	15	26
Passage 5	11	6	4	4	5	10	15	24
Passage 6	2	19	2	10	9	9	10	19
Passage 7	2	9	1	4	9	10	10	31
Passage 8	5	4	2	16	5	5	15	24
Totals	46	90	17	65	51	61	111	202

in one passage; and the two translations have the same number in the other three passages. The 1966 translation has a greater number of structural alterations in all eight passages.

Application of Chi Square Tests of Significance¹⁵

Considering only the total number of alterations marked in the literal transfers, the 1966 Tagalog translation has approximately twice as many additions, nearly four times as many omissions, and nearly twice as many structural alterations as the 1933 translation, but the number of transpositions is about equal in the two translations. Chi square tests were made on the total number of frequencies in each category to determine if the differences were statistically significant. The chi squares obtained for additions, omissions, and structural alterations were all significant beyond the .01 level of confidence. The chi square obtained for transpositions, however, was not significant. These results indicate that in the passages selected for comparison, the two Tagalog translations differ significantly with regard to the number of additions, omissions, and structural alterations, but not with regard to the number of transpositions. The lack of significant difference between the two translations within this category may be due to the fact that the 1933 translation made a number of transpositions to conform more closely to English word order, which tended to balance out the transpositions made by the 1966 translation for other reasons.

Comparison of the Two Translations for Accuracy of Meaning

The comparison of the two Tagalog translations as to the meaning of the Greek text was based only on an examination of the structural alterations made by one or both of the translations. While it was recognized that the other changes might affect the meaning of a passage, they could reflect merely stylistic differences.¹⁶ The structural alterations, on the other hand,

¹⁵ (Chi square is a statistical test designed to determine the goodness of fit of the actual data to the theoretical distribution. Ed.)

¹⁶ These kinds of changes do, however, affect naturalness, which will be discussed in the next article in this series.

seemed to be a better criterion for judging the extent to which the translations were faithful to the meaning of the original Greek text.

Conclusions regarding the Accuracy of Structural Alterations

Both Tagalog and Greek source materials, including dictionaries and grammars, were used to analyse the meaning of each of the structural alterations underlined in either of the two Tagalog translations, the corresponding expression used in the other Tagalog translation, and the Greek expression which was being translated. On the basis of these analyses, a conclusion was reached with regard to the relative accuracy of the two translations in each case. Structural alterations which were judged to be more faithful to the meaning of the Greek text than the corresponding expression in the other translation were marked with a plus sign (+); those which were judged to be less faithful, with a minus sign (-); and those which were judged to be equally faithful, with an equal sign (=). In addition, those renderings which bore a very close formal equivalence to the Greek text but which differed from those underlined in the other translation were marked with an asterisk (*).

The following tabulation evaluates structural alterations in Matt. 21: 34. It contains only those Greek expressions rendered in either Tagalog translation by an expression previously classified as a structural alteration.

Line	Greek text	1933 Tagalog text		1966 Tagalog text	
1	drew near/ approached	came near		<i>arrived/came</i>	—
2	fruits	<i>bearing fruit</i>	=	<i>plucking fruit</i>	=
3	sent away/sent off	<i>were commanded/ were sent</i>	—	<i>were caused to go there</i>	+
3	—he	≠		<i>by owner of vineyard</i>	+
5	to receive/collect	be received		<i>be gotten</i>	=
5	fruits of him/it	his fruit*		<i>fruit allotted for him</i>	+

Tabulations Regarding the Accuracy of Structural Alterations

The following table gives the number of structural alterations in the passages from both Tagalog translations which were judged to be more faithful, less faithful, and equally faithful, when compared with the corresponding expression in the other translation.

This table shows that about half (56 out of 111) of the structural alterations marked in the 1933 Tagalog translation are as faithful in content as the corresponding expressions in the 1966 translation, but over 90 per cent (50 out of 55) of the remaining half are less faithfully rendered than the corresponding expressions in the later translation. On the other hand, nearly half (95 out of 202) of the structural alterations marked in the 1966 Tagalog

	1933 Tagalog Translation				1966 Tagalog Translation			
	More	Less	Equal	Total	More	Less	Equal	Total
Passage 1 ..	2	8	5	15	14	3	5	22
Passage 2 ..	0	12	7	19	22	2	13	37
Passage 3 ..	0	4	8	12	7	0	12	19
Passage 4 ..	1	6	8	15	12	1	13	26
Passage 5 ..	1	7	7	15	12	1	11	24
Passage 6 ..	1	3	6	10	8	1	10	19
Passage 7 ..	0	4	6	10	14	1	16	31
Passage 8 ..	0	6	9	15	8	1	15	24
Totals ..	5	50	56	111	87	10	95	202

translation are as faithful in content as the corresponding expressions in the 1933 translation, and 90 per cent of the remainder (87 out of 97) are more faithfully rendered than the corresponding expressions in the earlier translation.

An even clearer picture of the relative accuracy of the two translations is presented in the following table enumerating the Greek expressions examined which are more faithfully rendered in the 1933 translation, those which are more faithfully rendered in the 1966 translation, and those which are rendered with equal faithfulness in both translations:

	1933	1966	Both	Total
	Translation	Translation	Translations	
	More Faithful	More Faithful	Equally Faithful	
Passage 1	4	16	6	26
Passage 2	2	23	13	38
Passage 3	0	9	13	22
Passage 4	1	12	13	26
Passage 5	1	14	13	28
Passage 6	2	9	12	23
Passage 7	1	14	16	31
Passage 8	1	10	15	26
Totals	12	107	101	220

This table shows that, in the rendering of the 220 Greek expressions analyzed, the two Tagalog translations are equally faithful to the meaning of the original in 46 per cent of the cases (101 out of 220); but in the remaining 119 expressions the 1966 translation is more faithful to the meaning in 90 per cent of the cases (107 out of 119), while the 1933 translation is more faithful in only 10 per cent of them (12 out of 119).

Relation between Form and Content

The comparison of the two Tagalog translations for fidelity in form and content has shown that, while the 1933 translation is much closer to the

Greek text in form, the 1966 translation is much closer to the Greek in content. What is remarkable is that the very expressions in the 1933 Tagalog translation which are the more nearly equivalent to the Greek text in form are the ones which are the less equivalent to the Greek text in content. On the other hand, many of the expressions in the 1966 Tagalog translation which are more different in form were found to be closer to the content of the Greek text than the corresponding formal equivalents used in the 1933 translation. *It may be concluded, therefore, that a translation which corresponds very closely in form to the original does not correspond in meaning as well as a translation which expresses the meaning in a form quite different from that of the original.*

(to be continued)

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LUTHER'S INSIGHTS INTO THE TRANSLATOR'S TASK

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(See H. Wilbur Aulie's book review on p. 100.)

Introduction

There is an Italian proverb which says "*Traduttore traditore*". The phrase points up what most authors feel about the efforts of translators to render their original works into another language: "The translator is a traitor."¹

Naturally, there is a degree of exaggeration in this; however, any translator who has attempted to take a piece of writing and express thoughts, spirit and "personality"—the life and breath of the writer's soul—via a completely different language has experienced the frustrating feeling that, try as he will, he cannot capture and express everything which the author originally intended. The subtle connotations of strong and weak words, the alliterative play on words, the catchy juxtaposition of matching phrases, the scholarly pun—these are some of the stylistic elements which go towards making a living piece of writing. Unfortunately, though, these are the very things that test and defy the translator's art most severely. The result is that something is

¹ F. F. Bruce, *The English Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. x.