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## CONTENTS

	Pages
<b>Techno-Biblical Translation and Epistemological Shift in African Theological Education</b> D. ADEYEFA .....	1 - 20
<b>Firm Attributes and Tax Aggressiveness: Assessment of Pre IFRS-Adoption in Listed Nigerian Manufacturing Companies</b> O. A. ADEDIPE, A. S. ADEOLA and J. A. OKEWOLE .....	21 - 39
<b>The Impacts of Cultural Diversity in the Event Industry: A Theoretical Approach</b> O. S. FOLORUNSO, H. M. ADEBAYO, A. A. BASHIRU, E. E. AKERELE and O. O. LAWAL .....	40 - 51
<b>The Two Faces of Poverty in Northwestern Nigeria</b> Y. B. OKEWOLE .....	52 - 77
<b>Igbo Migrant Settlers in Abidjan, 1970-1990</b> M. T. AZEEZ, A. A. OLADITI and S. A. ADETUTU .....	78 - 91
<b>Patterns of Conversation in the Discourses of Channels Television's <i>Politics Today</i></b> O. B. JOLAOSO and S. O. AYOOLA .....	92 - 107

# TECHNO-BIBLICAL TRANSLATION AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL SHIFT IN AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the enduring significance of Bible translation as both a historical phenomenon and a central component of biblical hermeneutics, highlighting its distinctive textual mandate and insightful cultural implications. While Africa played a pioneering role in early biblical translation, contemporary African theological education faces the challenge of optimally integrating modern technological tools to enhance interpretive depth and accessibility, often adhering to less dynamic traditional methods. It is against this backdrop that this research introduces techno-biblical translation as a procedure that systematically merges traditional scriptural understandings with digital innovations. Employing a descriptive approach and engaging specific Yoruba Bible translations, the study explores the theological and cultural implications of this connection. Findings reveal that integrating digital resources—including e-Bibles, translation software, and online linguistic tools—is imperative for fostering an epistemological shift thereby enabling more accurate exegesis, clarifying textual ambiguities, and significantly improving the efficiency and effectiveness of theological instruction and ministerial practice in the African context. Thus, African theological stakeholders are enjoined to embrace these theological advancements for richer engagements and enhanced Christian outreaches.

**Keywords:** Yoruba Bible, Techno-biblical Translation, Biblical Hermeneutics, Digital tools

## **INTRODUCTION**

The reality of supernatural experiences is venerated not only in the prehistoric Jewish worldview but also in the African cosmological belief systems (Idowu, 1962; Mbiti, 1969; Bewaji, 1998). Though rooted in different theological paradigms, both the Bible and African traditional religion attest to the centrality of Supreme Being in maintaining cosmic and moral order. Ayantayo (2018: 26) submits that “beliefs in God, divination, ancestors, spirits, magic and medicines constitute the creed of African traditional religion,” thereby illustrating that belief in a supreme deity is embedded within African spiritual tradition. In the same

vein, in Judeo-Christian tradition, the Bible attests to the veracity of the Supreme Being and His significance in fostering peace and stability on earth and in the afterlife. The (in) stability of the universe is portrayed as dependent on human existence and their relationship with God; and, by extension, their afterlife transition to either paradise or hell is dependent on their submission to God on one hand and their decision to renounce the devil and his cohorts on the other hand. Africans (particularly the Yoruba people) have always known God, and the concept of God, the Almighty, *Olodumare*, was never absent from their understanding (Idowu, 1962). Similarly, they were equally aware of the existence of the world of the spirits even before the Greco-Jewish perception of Africa reached them. However, through translation, the biblical belief in God and spirits is brought to people outside Greco-Jewish linguistic communities, such as Africans, in languages alien to their milieu and worldview.

The word "translation" originates from the Latin word *translatio*, which connotes *carrying over* or *transfer*. Biblically, the origin of translation is linked to the language confusion at Babel because, before then, the language of the world was monolithic. Ibitokun (2008:5) puts it as thus:

Over aeons of ages human language existed. What could it have been in the beginning? The most sensible conjecture we could make about it is that it was the only one. The Christian Bible tells us that before the collapse of the Tower of Babel, the human race enjoyed a univocal language... Adam's univocal language, whatever its syntax may have been, must have been based on this principle of contrastiveness, similar to what obtains in variegated nature and between Adam himself and Eve, *his alter-ego*.

Here, from a syntactico-semantic perspective, Ibitokun (2008:5) introduces the biblical oneness of language in the Adamic universe "to x-ray a kind of metaphysical knot which exists and ought to exist between the nature of the world and our basic human behaviours and propensities." In Gen. 11:1 (NIV), the Bible records that "Now the whole world had one language and a common speech... " and in an attempt to build a tower that would reach Heaven but the Lord confounded their language.

6 The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." 8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called 'Babel' — because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world... (Gen. 11:5-9 NIV)

The language confusion necessitated the first world of humans to look for

alternative ways of communication. The power of language cannot be overemphasised. Thus, when language is not comprehensible, there is bound to be communication chaos, which was evident in the above setting. The quest to address the chaotic situation necessitated oral translation in the form of gesticulation and interpretation. In this vein, the oral transfer of messages (interpretation) was overtaken by the writing and reading transfer (translation). Hence, Philip asked the Ethiopian Eunuch "Do you understand what you are reading?" The Eunuch's response was sincere, honest, and impressive: "How can I, except some man should guide me?" (Acts 8:31). The language of the Bible needs to be understood in other ethnocultural contexts. This is because "the Word of God transcends the cultures in which it has found expression and has the capability of being spread in other cultures in such a way as to be able to reach all human beings in their cultural contexts" (Omojola, 2018:vi).

The above texts underscore the significance of the Word of God and the understanding of the same in a cultural context. The mandate is to break cultural-linguistic barriers and reach out to the people of the world with the Word of God in their cultural contexts. It is against this background that the task of Bible translation and biblical hermeneutics vis-à-vis theological education and Christian ministry lies. In the title of this study, "Techno-biblical Translation" is conceived as both the product and process of reproducing and interpreting the Bible as well as its versions via technological systems and devices. On the other hand, in contrast to traditional methods of biblical interpretation, "epistemological shift" refers to a dynamic change in the acquisition and interpretation of biblical knowledge, engaging digital tools and methods in the theory, principles, concepts and systems of interacting with, translating and analysing the Bible and its versions. This study employs "African theological education" to include all forms of religious teachings and learning phenomena stemming from the Jewish scriptural orientations, which are related to the African context. This paper, therefore, explores the significance of technological applications to biblical translation in African theological education. Bible translation, therefore, becomes a cultural and theological undertaking as it is interwoven within specific cultural contexts of African communities thereby becoming a tool for knowledge dissemination and exchange. The understanding of this historical pre-eminence and ongoing imperative is crucial for appreciating the unique significance of Bible translation in Africa's theological narrative.

## **2. BIBLE TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL-PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS IN AFRICAN THEOLOGY**

*Why Translate the Bible?*

Historically, Bible translation is uniquely significant to Africa due to its pioneering role, enduring impact and the immense effort spanning centuries. Ayegboyin (2017:8) notes, 'It is strongly believed amongst historians that, the first translation of the Bible in North Africa from Hebrew into Latin and miscalled *Itala*, occurred before 200 AD. It was probably this translation which was frequently quoted by Tertullian.' This historical contention positions Africa, particularly North Africa, as the epicentre of Bible translation and advocates African efforts in the global history of Christian Scripture as well as maintains that African missions in Bible translation practices precede European translation endeavours. Linking the development of Latin Theology to North Africa presupposes the availability of the Bible in Latin. Its translation history is also notable because it is itself a translation from ancient original manuscripts, relying on early versions like the Septuagint and Vulgate. The ongoing translations reflect evolving linguistic epistemology and theological understanding. Early attempts prioritised literalness; later versions aimed for more natural rendering. The manual reproduction of early texts also introduced potential variations (Fagbohun, 2003). This prominence stems from its exploration of fundamental human questions about existence, purpose, and destiny, shaping the beliefs of billions. Furthermore, the Bible uniquely claims divine prohibition against altering its text.

The profound subject matter of the Bible directly addresses humanity's fundamental existential inquiries. Unlike other texts that might focus on specific rituals, philosophical systems, or historical accounts, the Bible delves into the very core of human existence. It grapples with questions that resonate across cultures and throughout time: the origin of humanity, the purpose of life's journey, and the ultimate destiny that awaits man on Earth. This universal cum deeply personal relevance has driven countless individuals across the globe to seek answers within its pages, solidifying its importance and necessitating its translation into numerous languages to reach these seekers. The doctrines and principles found within the Bible have become deeply ingrained in the emotional and moral fabric of billions, further underscoring the critical need for accessible translations.

Furthermore, the unique claim against textual alteration sets the Bible apart in the realm of translation. The text itself explicitly forbids deliberate additions or subtractions during transmission, including the process of translation. This creates an unparalleled sense of responsibility and caution for translators. Unlike other works where adaptation or interpretation might be more freely employed, Bible translation is often approached with a heightened awareness of preserving the perceived original intent and meaning. This self-imposed restriction, rooted in the belief in the Bible's divine origin and authority, contributes significantly to

its unique position and the meticulous, often debated, nature of its translation and critique.

Many Bible critics have condemned the translation of the Word of God on the belief that it loses the intent and content of the original message during linguistic negotiations. They, therefore, argue that the Word of God should not be translated from the ancient original texts to protect its originality and sanctity and ensure it is free from erroneous tendencies. Nevertheless, as "the human race grew larger, there was a need to commit this special relationship between God and the human race to writing (and rewriting) to avoid errors and exaggerations, distortion, and interference" (Bracket mine) (Omojola, 2018:vi).

The quest to make the relationship between God and man known to the entire world calls for the writing and translation of the original Bible. The challenges of language multiplicity, dynamism, and ethnocultural distinctions are some of the major reasons that have necessitated Bible translations and retranslations. Beegle (1960), cited in Adeyefa (2024:224-227), postulates five factors that have been inducing Bible translations: "discovery of more accurate texts; dynamism of human languages; renewal of emphasis on translation intelligibility; new meaning for biblical terms; and improvement in the interpretation of passages".

The dynamism of language refers to linguistic changes, growth, invention, innovations, and transformation as a result of the representation of the world as a global village. The intelligence of the message of the Bible is dependent on the understanding of the linguistic codes that communicate the content and intent of God's Word to His audience. Translation intelligibility, therefore, refers to the necessity of making the written Word of God intelligible to the target audience. This is because a word that means something in this context might mean another thing in another context. That is why it has been avowed that "different books of the Old Testament represent different stages of the language development of Hebrew. Therefore, "the same words might mean something different in different texts, depending on their date of origin" (Szlaga 1986: 196). As ethno-cultural matters assume new meaning in our sociolinguistic milieu, so too, are many biblical terms taking on new meaning in the course of life as new documents are discovered.

Nihinlola (2014:29-30), while referring to the King James Version, adds that "the reason why the recent translations are more dependable is that they are based on better ancient manuscripts and a greater knowledge of the ancient languages than were available in 1611." It can be concluded that the reason for translations and retranslations is to assist humanity in understanding the truth of God's Word. Consequent upon this, translations and retranslations depend on biblical archaeological discoveries and continual changes in human language as a result of language dynamism, increasing demand for simplification of the Word of God

for the common man, new meanings for biblical expressions, and improving interpretations of the biblical message (Beegle, 1960).

The enduring significance of Bible translation stems from its engagement with fundamental human questions and this is a pursuit that has driven its dissemination across linguistic barriers for billions. Despite claims of potential interpretive loss, the imperative for translation arises from the very growth and diversification of humanity, coupled with the dynamic nature of language and evolving cultural understandings. The ongoing process of translation and retranslation is driven by factors such as the discovery of more accurate texts and the need for intelligibility; this is to ensure that the Bible's message remains accessible and relevant, bridging the gap between ancient contexts and contemporary understanding for a global audience. Thus, the multifaceted imperative for Bible translation is rooted in both the nature of the sacred text and the evolving dynamics of human language and culture.

### *Language and Culture in Bible Translation*

Language, as a dynamic human agent, perpetually oscillates between different forms or characters, serving as both a constructive and destructive force within sociocultural communication. Iwara (2005: 74) corroborates the above assertion when he avows that:

Language is like the atom bomb: depending on the use one makes of it, it can cause widespread devastation, as it can be a source for peace and harmony. So powerful, in fact, is language that it has sometimes been claimed that the pen is mightier than the sword ... This is possible because language impacts heavily on a wide range of domains where human beings have vested interest.

Humans appreciate their worldviews through sound interpretations in the languages that they understand because language is intricately linked to culture:

Language is culture, and culture, the material product of an immaterial, spiritual essence, is like "the word", a buoyant, unstable, and secretive commodity to be bought, sold, and haggled over in the fleeting world of man. Sound culture or civilisation always goes beyond nativism or centripetalism if outlandishness is to be thrown overboard (Ibitokun, 2008:5).

Language is, therefore, a cultural phenomenon that needs to be interpreted with the consciousness of intercultural contradictions and prescriptions in a target cultural context.

Since language expresses culture, the Jewish language is a manifestation of the Jewish culture; just as many other human communities' worldviews (like African ones) are inseparable from their cultures. The peculiarities of human

culture are embedded in their languages. In an attempt to negotiate cultural-linguistic differences, translation, therefore, becomes imperative. This is because translation is an extension of cultural-linguistic intervention intended for a purpose, which is evident in Bible Translation.

Scholars such as Saint Jerome, Martin Luther, William Tyndale, Eugene Nida and Charles Taber throughout history who have significantly contributed to Bible translation understand the crucial necessity of comprehending both the original linguistic and cultural context of the Bible and that of the target communities. Recognising that language is inherently tied to culture, they emphasised that cultural understanding is essential for interpreting the biblical authors' intended message. Consequently, Bible translators must be attuned to the dynamic relationship between the biblical text and its translations to ensure relevance in both the source and target cultural and linguistic contexts (Adeyefa, 2022).

The Bible is interventionistic and employs translation as a medium of dissemination with specific intentions and functions. The intention and function of the Bible in a human context are achieved through methods of translation. Ciampa (2013:66) asserts:

One of the key issues that determines the approach or method of translation that will be adopted is the question of the intended purpose or function of the translation. Some translations are intended for liturgical reading in churches. Some are intended for personal devotional use. Some have more academic studies in mind. A translation might be intended, among other things, to highlight the voices and presence of people on the margins (or at least to be careful not to let them be marginalised due to cultural myopia or neglect). Many translations are prepared with a view to promoting Christian evangelistic or missionary work. Other translations may be primarily intended for historical or literary study or to be used in children's literature or materials prepared for people with limited reading abilities.

The Bible is therefore translated from its original form for historical, evangelical, liturgical, devotional, studying, theological, and literary purposes and functions. For these purposes to be achieved, a specific type of translation or translation may be requested. For instance, Bibles are replete with various reading aids that help Bible students understand the content and context of biblical revelations, leaving readers to make appropriate decisions. In line with this position, Sánchez-Cetina comments:

Post-missionary translation of the Bible must consider the indisputable fact that translating Biblical content requires a 'translation' of the various contexts that are essential to a fuller understanding of the text.

This need has led Bible translating organizations to consider the development of Study Bibles, that is, versions of the Bible that include various 'reader's aids', such as introductions to books and major sections; footnotes highlighting historical, social, cultural, religious, archaeological, and geographical aspects; insets, maps, glossaries, as well as thematic indexes. The purpose of these aids is to 'locate' the reader within the text's context. The object is not to tell the reader what he or she must believe but to provide tools and information so that the reader is better prepared to decide for himself or herself what the text means. (Sánchez-Cetina, n.d.: 407)

The choice of Bible version should be based on the purpose, audience, readers, and situation. Bible interpreters and ministers should enhance their engagements with the mindfulness and exploitation of different Bible translations. Bible interpreters and ministers should be conscious of the relationship between language and culture and their significance for culturally sensitive interpretation. The purposeful selection and application of diverse Bible translations, particularly those incorporating contextual aids and acknowledging the intended audience and purpose, are crucial for enhancing comprehension and effective engagement with biblical texts within varied cultural contexts, such as African theological education. This necessitates a deliberate and informed approach by theological educators and interpreters to leverage the unique strengths of different translations for specific pedagogical and ministerial goals.

Translation serves multiple specific purposes—from academic study to evangelism—and emphasised that discerning the appropriate translation method, often enhanced by contextual aids, is critical for achieving effective communication and culturally resonant understanding, particularly within African theological education. Consequently, Bible translation is a deliberate, purposeful act of cross-cultural communication, requiring careful consideration of both source and target contexts. It is therefore posited that this foundational understanding of translation's culturo-linguistic imperative underpins the historical evolution and pedagogical application of Bible translation within theological education.

#### *Bible Translation in Theological Education*

The English word *Bible* is from the Greek *biblos* or *biblia* and suggests "a written" or "a book" and was first called *Bibliotheca Divina* (that is, Divine Library) by Saint Jeromé (Akintola, 2017:13). While *Biblos* means book, *biblion* suggests a little book. The plural form of *biblos* is *biblia*, and it is this *biblia* that has undergone a series of transliterations and transmissions into so many

languages, such as Latin (in the olden days), Biblia; English, Bible; Yoruba, Bibeli (Afolabi, 1989: 8), and the like. Linguistically, the earliest biblical texts of the Old Testament belong to Hebrew and Aramaic of the Semitic division of Afro-Asiatic languages, while those of the New Testament belong to Greek of the Hellenic division of Indo-European languages. That is why the Old Testament is acclaimed to be written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New Testament is written in Greek. However, some scholars have asserted that there is also a Greek version of the Old Testament, which contains some books that are neither Hebrew nor Aramaic (see Kuczok: 2013:61). The archaic Hebrew language from the Semitic family was similar to and derived from other ancient Afro-Asiatic and Semitic languages: Chaldean, also called Babylonian, and Phoenician. Aramaic resulted from the mingling of many foreign elements with Hebrews throughout the numerous invasions, defeats, and periods of captivity suffered by the Hebrews (Btrawick,1970).

The first translation of the Bible into another language, called the Septuagint, was in Greek. The translation of the Bible from its original form into Syriac, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin is the earliest in history. For instance, the Old Testament was translated into Greek around the 3rd century BC to enable the Jewish faithful living in Alexandria to read the Holy Scripture. The translation is known as the Septuagint (LXX). The name "Septuagint" symbolically represents the seventy translators of the Bible. This translation into theological tradition is significant as it was adopted by the early Church, which had a pre-Masoretic version of the Hebrew Scriptures as its source text as well as the inclusion of deuterocanonical books. The Greek and Latin Bible translations have greatly influenced BY the expansion of Christianity (Kuczok, 2013). Some of the apostles and disciples' manuscripts were translated into ancient languages such as Armenian, Coptic, Ethiopian, Georgian, Latin, and Syria. Though the New Testament manuscripts are not directly the same graphically, because there were many, it was easy to select the most accurate (JW.org, 2020). Omojola (2018:vi) opines that:

Historically, as people dispersed to various places and came into contact with different peoples, cultures, and languages, the Scriptures needed to be translated into languages other than the original Hebrew language for easy transmission and especially to cater to (SIC) the needs of the Jews in the Diaspora. Hence, the Greek translation known as the Septuagint (LXX) came to be because Greek was the language of commerce and art at the time. From this, some other translations of the scriptures followed, such as the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Aramaic Targums, the Vulgate, etc. (Omojola, 2018:vi).

Thereafter, the translation of the Bible is extended to other languages of the

world, including Africa. For instance, in Nigeria, the Bible was translated into Yoruba by Samuel Ajayi Crowther, thereby influencing the literacy status of the Yoruba people. This is because many of them were privileged to interact with the Word of God in their native language. In the same vein, the translation of the Bible was extended to Igbo and other languages. Bible translation in Nigeria has not only influenced the intellectual development of the country but also expanded the propagation of the gospel among the African people (Ayegboyin, 2017).

Thus, translation, in no small measure, has influenced the propagation of God's Word not only in the past generations but also in the present world. The preface to the Revised Standard Bible sums it up in this long but worthy expression:

The Bible is more than a historical document to be preserved. And it is more than just classic English literature to be cherished and admired. It is a record of God's dealings with men and of God's revelation of Himself and His will. It records the life and work of Him in whom the word of God became flesh and dwelt among men. The Bible carries its full message, not to those who regard it simply as a heritage of the past or praise its literary style, but to those who read it so that they may discern and understand God's word to men. That word must not be disguised in phrases that are no longer clear, or hidden under words that have changed or lost their meaning. It must stand forth in language that is direct, plain, and meaningful to people today (Holy Bible Revised Standard Version, Preface 1971:vii).

Bible versions translated from the inerrant Word of God are meant to reveal the truth of God's word, influence the expansion of God's kingdom, and address not only humanity as a whole but also a specific audience. Against the theory of preservation of historical documents and literary aesthetics, the Bible chronicles and unveils the revelation of divinity and the will of sovereignty towards humanity. Translation, from age to age, serves as a medium that communicates the knowledge of God's Word to human communities in languages that are simple, explicit, and acceptable, starting from the oral form to written and other media forms:

Until recently, Bible translations have virtually always been presented in written form, but now they are often prepared for use in other media, whether audio, video, animation, graphic literature, oral, dramatic, or musical presentation, sign language, etc. Each potential medium raises different questions and places different requirements on the translator(s) (Ciampa, 2013:63).

It is therefore significant for Bible users to be acquainted with other media of Bible production to help them in their interactions with them.

When Bible translation is carried out in missionary contexts or in the developing world, it has been common for missionaries or foreign agencies to play the leading role in the work, bringing in their own expertise but also sometimes marginalizing the local community and minimizing the essential contributions of their mother tongue collaborators. (Prosper, Bessong and Kenmogne, 2007:355)

Thus, the journey of the Bible, from its Greek origins as a *written* work to its myriad forms today, reveals a consistent drive for accessibility across linguistic differences, a necessity born from the very dispersal and diversification of humanity. Effective transmission has always demanded a keen awareness of both the original and target cultural and linguistic milieux. Over time, the medium of biblical communication has evolved, now embracing a multimodal approach that reflects our changing world. Notably, contemporary efforts increasingly recognise the pivotal role of local influences in shaping translations that resonate differently within their cultural contexts. Furthermore, the impact of Bible translation extends beyond the purely religious, demonstrably influencing societal development. Ultimately, the purpose and intended audience of any given translation profoundly shape its character and impact. As we move forward, the burgeoning role of technology promises to further transform how individuals and communities engage with this enduring text.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

This study explores the relevance of technological epistemology to biblical translation within the context of African theological education. It elaborates on the importance of Bible translation in the task of biblical hermeneutics, aiming to acquaint theological educators with relevant technological facilities and accessible translation tools applicable to the African context. In view of that, the research draws attention of African theological educators to online translation and interpreting materials available in the digital space. It brings to the fore the significance of these technological translation tools in theological education and Christian ministry in African.

To achieve the above objectives, the study adopted a descriptive research method which involves historicising Bible translation phenomena, acquainting Bible interpreters with specific reasons for and defining key approaches to Bible translations. The study purposively selected Isaiah 45:11, from six Yoruba Bible translations chosen because of their relevance to different translation approaches. The translations are *Bibeli Yoruba Majemu Ti Laelae Ati Majemu Titun* (1992); *Iwe Mimo ni Itimo Aye Titun* (1997); *Bibeli Mimo Ni Ede Yoruba Ode Oni* (2017); *Bibeli Mimo Atoka Ati Iwe Deutero-Kanonika (Apokrifa) Pelu Oro Jesu Ni Pupa* (2018); *Bibeli Mimo Atoka Pelu Awon Eroja Iranlowo Fun Awon Iranse*

*Olorun* (2019); and *Bibeli iròyìn Aṣọ̀ Pẹ̀lú Apókírifá United Bible Society 2020*). The analysis aims to foreground the value of translation and retranslation as well as the benefits of consulting multiple Bible translations for theological interpretation. The selected text was subjected to techno-biblical analysis, which accentuates the interface between biblical text, translation implication, and technological tools.

#### **4. INTERSECTING BIBLE VERSIONS AND EPISTEMIC SHIFTS IN AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL FORMATION**

##### *Poetics of Bible Translation Approaches for Theological Education*

The poetics of Bible translation refers to the theory, principle, concept, and system of interacting, translating, and analysing the Bible and its versions. It suggests how theological educators, Bible students, and Christian ministers can have a fundamental knowledge of several Bible versions and take advantage of these versions for their educational and ministerial benefits. Most Bible versions that are available to us can be classified based on the approaches that were employed by their translators. Bible translators translate based on purpose, function, *relevance*, and target audience. When a Bible student, scholar, teacher, preacher, or user picks up a Bible, such a person should be able to know the purpose, function, and specific target audience of that particular Bible version. Knowledge of the content and intent of God's Word is not enough for primary users of the Bible translations. The understanding of the linguistic *how*, *why*, and *what* of the Bible is also germane to ministerial engagements. The analysis of the approaches that guide the translations of the Word of God is important to the advancement of Christian education and ministry. Nida and Taber (2003) mention two major ways of translating the Bible: formal correspondence and dynamic equivalence.

Formal equivalence is a kind of literal translation in which "the features of the form of the source text have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language.

Typically, formal correspondence the grammatical and stylistic patterns of the receptor language and hence distorts the message, to cause the receptor to misunderstand or to labour unduly hard" ((Nida and Taber, 2003: 201). On the contrary, dynamic equivalence is that translation "in which the language of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors. Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change follows the rules of back transformation in the source language, of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful" (Nida and Taber, 2003: 201). It should be noted

that instead of discouraging the use of formal correspondence, as highlighted by Nida and Taber as a distortion of “grammatical and stylistic pattern” and message, one could simply assert the difficulty of the lucidity of the formal correspondence for laypersons or common bible users. For the theologians, the formal correspondence approach is germane to the understanding of the nitty-gritty of the biblical native expressions. Thus, instead of condemning either of the two translations, it is rather constructive to highlight the distinguished function(s) of each of the translations foregrounded in the employment of either the formal correspondence or the dynamic equivalence.

I have analytically summed up, in four categories, the major Bible translations readily available for Bible scholars in our linguistic communities under a methodical typology. These are word-for-word translations, literal translations, free translations, and equivalence translations. The word-for-word translation is an interlinear translation. It is a mathematical representation of the source text in the target language. A good example is the Interlinear Bible. Literal translation maintains the original Bible's complexity and ambiguity without substituting the figurative expression and cultural allusions in the target language. King James Version, New King James Version (NKJV), Revised Standard Version (RSV), and New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) could be good illustrations of literal translation. Free translation is the reword (paraphrase) category. It is interested in the simplification of the Bible message to make it accessible to today's users at all levels. The Good News Bible (GNB), New Living Translation (NLT), and The Message Bible (TM) ARE examples of free translations. Extra care, however, must be taken when using TM because of its looseness. Dynamic equivalent translation prioritises equivalent impacts of the original text within the target setting. The New International Version is the symbol of the dynamism of language.

Let me conclude this section with the brief analysis of Isaiah 45:11 to bring to the fore the importance of translation and retranslation as well as working with several translations. Some versions, like KGV, NWT, and even the new Kumuyi's translation (*Bibeli Mimo Atoka Pelu Awon Eroja Iranlowo Fun Awon Iranse Olorun*, First Edition 2019 published by Bible Society of Nigeria), translated the last expression of Isaiah 45:11 into Yoruba as a statement of fact and command, as in “*Command ye me*”, as indicated below:

“Èyí ni ohun tí Jèhófà wí, Èni Mímó Ísírélí àti Aṣẹ̀dà rẹ̀:

“È bèèrè lẹ̀wọ̀ mí àní nípá àwọn ohun tí ń bọ̀ ní tí àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ mí; àti nípá igbòkẹgbodò ọ̀wọ̀ mí, ẹ̀ pàṣẹ̀ fún mí.” (Aisaya 45:11, Ìwé Mímọ̀ ní Ìtúmọ̀ Ayé Titun)

Isaiah 45:11: “Báyíí ní OLÚWA wí, Èni-Mímọ̀ Isareli, àti Èlẹ̀dàá rẹ̀, “Bèèrè nàkan tí ń bọ̀ lẹ̀wọ̀ Mí, ní tí àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ Mí ọ̀kúnrin, àti ní tí isẹ̀

**ṣwọ̀ Mì, ẹ̀ pàṣẹ̀ fún Mì.**” (*Bibeli Mimo Atoka Pelu Awon Eroja Iranlowo Fun Awon Iranse Olorun*, First Edition 2019: Bible Society of Nigeria)

The absence of the interrogative mark at the end of the clause has led many people to quote it as God requesting His subject to command Him, even though he was emphasising His supremacy. This punctuation ambiguity is cleared in other translations like the NIV, the GNB, and others. The Yoruba translations below either represent the translation in an interrogative sentence or graphically add the punctuation mark to correct the ambiguous notion and uphold clarity.

Isaiah 45:11: **Báyíí ni Yahwe wí, Ẹ̀ni-Mímọ̀ Isareli: , òjẹ̀ iwọ̀ ó bi mi léréè àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ mi ti iwọ̀ tàbí pàṣẹ̀ fún mi ní ti isẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ mi í?** (*Bibeli Mimo Atoka Ati Iwe Deutero-Kanonika (Apokrifá) Pelu Oro Jesu Ni Pupa*, First Edition 1990 Ibadan: St Paul Publication 2018).

Isaiah 45:11: **“Báyíí ni Oluwa wí, Ẹ̀ni-Mímọ̀ Isareli, àti Ẹ̀lédáá rẹ̀, “E ha le bi mi nipa ohun ti nbo wa niti àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ mi, tàbí pàṣẹ̀ fún mi ní ti isẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ mi?”** (*Bibeli Yoruba Majemu Ti Laelae Ati Majemu Titun*, First Edition 1992 Ibadan: Kaybal Bible Mission).

Isaiah 45:11: **“Ohun ti OLÚWA wí niyí, Ẹ̀ni Mímọ̀ Israeli, ati Ẹ̀lédáá rẹ̀. Nípa ohun ti n bó, òjẹ̀ ó n bi mi léréè nipa àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ mi, tàbí kí o pàṣẹ̀ fún mi nipa isẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ mi bí?”** (*Bibeli Mimo Ni Ede Yoruba Ode Oni*, First Edition 2009 China: The International Bible Society 2017).

Isaiah 45:11: **“OLÚWA , Ẹ̀ni Mímọ̀ Isareli, ẹ̀lédáá rẹ̀ ni, “Sé ẹ̀ óo máa bi mi ní ibèrèrè nipa àwọn ọ̀mọ̀ mi ni, ọ̀kúnrin, tàbí ẹ̀ óo máa pàṣẹ̀ fún mi nipa isẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ mi ?”** (*Bibeli iròyìn Ayọ̀ Pèlú Apókírífá United Bible Society 2020*)

Considering our analytical principles and classification as well as the aforementioned translations, I argue that, interlinear translation alongside versions like the Revised Standard Version (RSV), should not be overlooked in contemporary theological studies such as biblical exegesis and hermeneutics. We can, therefore, infer that every Bible translation has a skopos (that is, purpose and function) and a specific audience. Thus, African teachers, interpreters, and ministers of the Bible are encouraged to take advantage of various Bible translations to understand and interpret the original (Biblical) texts for the benefit of theological education and ministry. Furthermore, as Africans are part of the contemporary technological advancements in the global space, it becomes necessary for African Christian educators and learners to carefully examine the pros and cons of technological inventions for the benefits of Christian advancement.

The understanding and application of diverse translated versions, facilitated by technological engagement, is paramount for precise biblical interpretations and effective theological formation in contemporary African contexts. It is,

therefore, posited that the integration of these refined translational insights naturally leads to a transformative epistemological shift, which necessitates a deeper exploration of techno-biblical translation and its role in modern African theological education.

### *Techno-Biblical Translation and Epistemological Shift*

In a bid to shift attention from traditional practices of biblical knowledge and look towards innovative praxis, we hypothesised that the application of technological resources is important to Biblical understanding of translation, exegesis, analysis, and interpretation in the digital age. We conceive a form of paradigm shift where theological scholars begin to engage biblical interpretation from novel perspectives for the advancement and sustenance of human existence and coexistence. One of the easiest ways to get an accurate and deeper understanding of the original Bible texts in the new era is through what we have termed techno-biblical translation. As distinct from techno-scientific translation, which deals with the translation of medical and legal texts, we conceive techno-biblical translation as an interplay between technology and Bible translation. Etymologically, the word *technology* has its roots in *techne* and *logie*, which suggests studies and explorations involving techniques, technical devices, and technicalities. The significance of technology in Bible translation cannot be understated.

Since technology has its root word evolving from “technique”, it is noteworthy from the above that the employment of *technique* and structure in the facilitation of human endeavours is as old as the Bible days. Human beings, as intelligent beings, are only improving on the known technologies. The design of an arc to transport Noah and others as well as the building of a tower, among others, are indications of technology. Technology, therefore, refers to skills, systems, savoir-faire, principles, and abilities that strengthen human skills, abilities, and adroitness. It is a means of amplifying inspirations and impacting lives for greater achievements, as well as bringing out and working out inner thoughts, ideas, and visions. To provoke the use of technological devices like computers in the contemporary world, Kelly (2011:59-60) asserts that “of all the sustainable things in the universe, from a planet to a star, from a daisy to an automobile, from a brain to an eye, the thing that can conduct the highest density of power—the most energy flowing through a gram of matter each second—lies at the core of your laptop.” And that the computer chip stands out as “the most energetically active thing in the known universe” (Kelly, 2011:59-60).

Reinke (2017:30-37) highlights and discusses nine major realities that the Bible teaches as the world of technology develops into the age of digital influences:

1. Technology modifies creation.
2. Technology pushes back the results of the fall.
3. Technology establishes human power.
4. Technology helps to edify souls.
5. Technology upholds and empowers our bodies.
6. Technology gives voice to human autonomy.
7. God governs every human technology.
8. Technology shapes every relationship.
9. Technology shapes our theology.

It is of utmost importance for Christian educators to take advantage of technological tools from a biblical standpoint for the advancement of biblical translation and interpretation. This engagement can unlock human potentials, cultivate individual characters, refine social structures, influence relational dynamics, and significantly improve the accessibility and quality of theological education. With little or no knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, techno-biblical translation has made it easier and faster to exegete, understand, and interpret the bible. To reveal technological relevance to biblical exegesis and translation analysis, Adeyefa (2022) adopted data from the *Interlinear Transliterated Bible (New Testament)* and *Online Parallel Bible Project (Biblos.com)*, "Strong's Greek: 5485. χάρις (charis) - grace, kindness" strongnumbers.com in the PC study software from a techno-biblical translation perspective to analyse and bring to the fore novel perspectives of interpreting *Charis* for theological implications.

Therefore, we assert that numerous e-bibles and translation tools, both online and offline, are valuable resources for biblical education, ministerial assignments, and effective Christian ministry. Bible scholars and Christian ministers should employ technological resources as a supplementary means of understanding, interpreting, and teaching the Word of God with greater ease in the contemporary age. By employing e-bibles and translation tools such as BibleGateway.com, biblestudytools.com, seekweb.com, PC Study Bible, and www.accordancebible.com, Bible scholars and ministers can bring innovation and dynamism to theological education and ministerial trends. These often freely available online resources facilitate ministerial improvements through a significant paradigm shift. Consequently, the application of techno-biblical translation to biblical exegesis and hermeneutic issues saves time, enhances the understanding of theological assertions, and improves ministerial propagation and Christian ministerial stewardship. Theological students and educators as well as Bible interpreters, are, therefore, encouraged to take advantage of technological resources in their ministerial engagements in the contemporary world. The strategic integration of technology into biblical translation and interpretation is not merely an enhancement but a fundamental necessity for the

future of African theological education, driving a crucial epistemological shift towards more dynamic, accessible, and contextually relevant engagement with sacred texts.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The preceding analysis underlines that the purposeful selection and application of diverse Bible translations, particularly those incorporating contextual aids and acknowledging the intended audience and purpose, are crucial for enhancing comprehension and effective engagement with biblical texts, especially within varied cultural contexts of African theological education. An effective biblical transmission has always demanded a keen awareness of both the original and target cultural and linguistic milieus and those of the target audience. The diverse Bible versions are intended to overcome communication barriers for specific audiences in an increasingly heterogeneous world with a growing number of languages. It is particularly important to utilise translations produced by native speakers of target languages to enhance the intelligibility and advancement of the gospel on continents like Africa.

The medium of biblical communication is now embracing a multimodal approach that is reflecting our dynamically changing world. The strategic integration of digital resources within techno-biblical translation methodologies offers a significant pathway to link cultural and linguistic boundaries, advancing a more refined and accessible understanding of sacred texts for African theological education in the contemporary digital landscape. This approach necessitates a conscious epistemological shift among educators and learners, urging a move beyond traditional methods to embrace the dynamic and comprehensive insights afforded by technological translation in the acquisition and interpretation of biblical knowledge. Ultimately, this integration aims to empower African theological education to engage deeply with the Scriptures thereby ensuring their relevance and impact across diverse African contexts.

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