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This thesis, entitled

An Orality Strategy: Translating the Bible for Oral Communicators

written by

Robin Green

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has been read and approved

by the undersigned members of the faculty

of the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics.

Karl Franklin

Dr. Karl Franklin (Thesis Committee Chair)

Catherine Rountree

Dr. Catherine Rountree

Pete Unseth

Dr. Pete Unseth

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By

Robin Green

Presented to the Faculty of
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

AN ORALITY STRATEGY: TRANSLATING THE BIBLE FOR ORAL COMMUNICATORS

Robin Green
Master of Arts
with major in
Applied Linguistics
The Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics, December 2007

Supervising Professor: Dr. Karl Franklin

This thesis examines the differences between oral communicators and literates, resulting in the call for an orality strategy for producing accessible Bible translations for oral communicators. The author proposes an oral translation. Four factors are identified as necessary for an oral translation—meaning-based translation, oral communication style, and sensitivity to both media and genre, and these factors are weighed against generally accepted goals for any translation. The author concludes that an oral translation recorded via audio media can serve as a permanent Scripture source for oral communicators.

To my parents, David and Olivia Green

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CHAPTER 1–INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this study is a plan for producing an oral Bible translation. I will identify factors and procedures that, if implemented, may lead to a successful translation for oral communicators.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The background studies and information in this thesis are designed to help translators understand how people communicate in oral societies. The predicted factors and procedures form a preliminary representation that translators may follow in producing a translation for oral communicators without dependence on literacy strategy (an oral translation).

1.3 Need for the Study

This study was inspired by a conversation in which a translator recalled his work on a project in Africa years before, when he had seen boxes of translated Bibles sitting in storage. He explained that the Bibles were not used because the intended audience could not read.

Margaret Hill described such situations this way:

> There are a number of houses and offices in various parts of Africa today that are piled high with New Testaments and Bibles in a variety of African languages. They are covered in dust, and no one has bought a copy for years. A team of people will have put in many hard years of work to produce the translation, and the cost of printing the books is high. Most people would agree that the truths of the Bible are best conveyed in our own mother tongue, the language of the heart. So why are these translations not being used? (Hill 1995:1).

Hill mentioned several reasons why people do not read the Scriptures, even when translated into their own mother tongue. One reason she termed simply “the barrier of illiteracy” (Hill 1995:7). In reality, illiteracy itself may not be the barrier preventing the world’s numerous oral communicators from having access to God’s Word; rather, the insistence on producing materials only accessible to literates might be the barrier. It is a matter of perspective.

1.3.1 Large Numbers of Oral Communicators

Lovejoy explained the literacy situation in an article called “The Extent of Orality.” Oral communicators, he said, can be distinguished by their “reliance on spoken language” for communication (Lovejoy, forthcoming). He defined orality as the extent to which people rely on oral, rather than written, communication, thereby using a “positive definition” describing people according to what they do, not by what they do not do. He added that a more complete definition accounts for the cognitive, communicational and relational characteristics of oral communicators (Lovejoy, forthcoming).[1]

In order to understand the extent of orality, it is necessary to understand the extent of literacy in the world, since data is collected on the latter but not the former. Despite high literacy rates put forth by groups like the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the facts may be quite different. The problem largely lies within the definition of literacy. Lovejoy said many governments are “quite generous” in their definitions, which vary widely from country to country (Lovejoy, forthcoming). While someone who can write his name on a form might be considered

---

[1] For a discussion on those characteristics, see the Review of Literature in chapter 2.

literate, that does not mean he can read a government document with understanding. Just as there are different degrees of literacy, there are different degrees of orality[2] (Lovejoy, forthcoming). Lovejoy said that most countries, however, still categorize people as either literate or illiterate according to their self-styled qualifications. He gave some examples to show the wide range of definitions for literacy. The following are considered literate:

- In Malaysia anyone aged 10 and older who has ever been to school
- In Burkina Faso everyone who says he can read and write in either one national or one foreign language
- In Pakistan anyone who can read a newspaper and write a simple letter in any language (Lovejoy, forthcoming).

Reporting anyone who has ever attended school or who declares himself literate without any kind of evidence means that rates are highly inflated (Lovejoy, forthcoming). To understand the extent and implications of the generosity of some countries' definitions of literacy, realize that "for the purpose of Christian discipleship, literacy would have to mean the ability to read and comprehend a fairly advanced and complicated book" (Dyer 1995:83).

In the 1990s the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) in the U.S. and the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) found much lower rates than reported, even in western nations. "Approximately half the populations in these countries proved to

---

[2] Lovejoy uses Ong's categories of "primary orality," regarding people with little or no acquaintance with literacy; and "secondary orality," regarding literates who prefer communication through electronic media; and he adds a third category that he attributes to sociologist Tex Sample: "traditional orality," regarding those who are familiar with reading and writing but use oral communication for daily living (Lovejoy, forthcoming).

have inadequate literacy skills, yet many of these countries had been reporting literacy rates of 95 percent or more," Lovejoy wrote (Lovejoy, forthcoming). He reasoned that, if this were true in developed nations with a history of prioritizing literacy, it would be even truer in developing nations with more limited funding for education. Thus, he projected that "half of the world's adults should be considered to have low literacy skills" (Lovejoy, forthcoming). Guessing that in developing nations the total would be closer to 70 percent, Lovejoy's projection was the first step in determining the number of oral communicators in the world.

Estimating that about 70 percent of the world's population is comprised of adults, Lovejoy said it would mean there are about three billion oral communicators. Add to this the 900 million very young children, and the estimated 450 million older children with little or no literacy skills, and it would mean about 4.35 billion people are oral communicators "by virtue of their limited literacy," or approximately 70 percent of all people living today. This number does not include literates who prefer to get their information through oral means (Lovejoy, forthcoming).

Klem wrote that a preference for oral communication is sometimes accompanied by a resistance to literacy, and to the Christianity so closely associated with it. In defending methods of reaching people through oral means, he said that "it is neither loving, respectful, nor constructive to view indigenous resistance" to literacy as "a disease to be cured." Instead, he said, "It is far wiser and more fruitful to attempt to empathize with the positive reasons people may have for preferring indigenous oral communications" (Klem 1982:98-99). For the purposes of this study, orality, a

preference for oral communication, will be considered a positive characteristic. Rather than defining orality as the lack of literacy skills, it will be defined as the prevalence of oral skills and preference for oral communication.

1.3.2 Differences Exist between Oral Communicators and Literates

Understanding that such a large number of people prefer to communicate orally, it is equally important to understand *how* they communicate. As Brown said, "…unless we can adapt our communications to our audience, we will limit our audience to those who think as we do" (Brown 2004:122). That could mean excluding more than four billion people from access to the Word of God in the way they understand best.

The premise of Walter Ong's 1982 book *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* is that literacy changes the way people think (Ong 1982:78). This means that oral communicators think, learn and communicate differently than literates, who often fail to appreciate oral means of communication. "The print-oriented outsider, or even the insider who has been trained in a print-oriented culture, wrongly expects the oral communicators in his or her audience to understand logical, analytical and abstract modes of reasoning," wrote Brown (Brown 1995:16-17). He also noted Ong's assertion that, as people become more literate, they lose their oral skills, further widening the gap between the literate and the oral (Brown 1995:35).

The section is not intended to be an exhaustive discussion on the differences between literates and oral communicators, but its purpose is to point out that research suggests these differences exist. Since oral and print communication are different, it is

important to tailor the message differently for oral communicators. A more in-depth look at this debate can be found in the Review of Literature in chapter 2.

1.3.3 Benefits of an Orality Strategy

The two generally recognized options for introducing Scriptures into oral cultures are the production of a print translation with accompanying literacy programs and the translation of Bible stories in oral form as a bridge to a later print translation. I am proposing a third option, an oral Bible translation. While the specific characteristics of an oral translation will be discussed in chapter 3, this section addresses the benefits of this option.

To mimic Sundersingh, this study operates under the assumption that the Bible is translatable, and apparently to the early Christians it was more often heard than read. The Gospel was perpetuated by word of mouth before it was at some point written down. "This process of translatability and adaptation that we see in the formation of the Biblical Scriptures holds the key to understanding issues that are relevant to" audio-based communication of Scripture (Sundersingh 2001:4-5).

Besides meeting the *need* for a Scripture oral communicators can understand (not "dumbed down" but adapted to their communication style), an oral approach to translation offers certain benefits. An oral translation can reach both the literate and the nonliterate, since, in the absence of a physical impairment, nearly everyone uses oral communication to some extent (Ansre 1995:68). Because a large number of people usually listen to a single Scripture recording, it is estimated that 3,000 sets of recorded

Scriptures can reach 30,000 people (Søgaard 1995:74). This means an audio version of the Bible may be effective in reaching larger numbers of people than a print version.

Oral translations can introduce God's Word in places and situations where print versions may not be able to go. For example, faraway and difficult-to-reach villages are not likely to have sustained literacy programs. Rebel areas may be unsafe for literacy workers. Borders may be difficult to cross with books. And some areas simply may not have enough workers for literacy programs. In all these cases, a recorded translation could work effectively where a print translation could not (Malmstrom 1991:19-23).

For some people, having their language written may be taboo or violate religious beliefs. This is the case in many Muslim cultures where Arabic is the only language acceptable for sacred writings (Porter 1995:105). It would be very difficult for people in this type of situation to become literate in the vernacular or, if they did somehow become literate, to read the Bible without persecution. In this case, audio-Scriptures may be the only option.

Politics can contribute to the benefit of an oral translation; in some countries an unstable situation renders quite uncertain any ongoing literacy education. Government policies can wipe out existing literacy programs and leave people with no means for learning to read their print Bibles. In other places it has become illegal to even own a Bible, and Dyer wrote, "The Christians have only the ideas and concepts which they have been able to retain in their hearts and minds to sustain them spiritually" (Dyer 1995:83). An oral, memorizable Bible translation could weaken the severity of a literacy ban with regard to accessing Scripture.

Another reason to produce oral translations is the observation by missionaries that oral communicators are often more receptive to the Gospel than literates (Slack 1991, cited in Brown 1995:35). Introducing the Gospel through indigenous oral methods can reduce a group's resistance to the message, and even to literacy. Those who need to memorize what they learn appreciate a format that allows them to do that, and in this way they are sooner able to internalize and teach the message. Additionally, "existing patterns of leadership are not disrupted by a demand for new communicative skill among Christian leaders" (Klem 1982:xxiii).

1.3.4 Problems with Literacy Strategy

> In 1974, we produced Mark's Gospel and recorded it on tape. We only had one copy of the recording, but it was immediately in demand. We were hesitant to make it available because we wanted people to learn to read, so we produced a publication of Mark and taught literacy classes. In one church, I personally expounded Mark over a period of eight Sundays. This was enthusiastically received and was followed by a literacy course to teach people how to continue. I left the recording with one of the leaders for several months as an aid for reading, and he carried on an informal program. In early 1975, I withdrew the recording because I wanted him to use the book. We then went on furlough, and all use of Scripture in the local language stopped in that church. Of the 500 books of Mark we had left behind, hardly any were used by any of the groups I had taught to read. For example, I left 100 with one field pastor who knows how to read very well, and he returned 99 after I came back.
>
> Karl Grebe, "Scripture Cassette Program"

On top of Lovejoy's projections on the numbers of oral communicators who do not read, Gilbert Ansre's projections show that an even smaller percentage of people actually read Scripture. He listed the following statements that affect his projections:

- Not all people who say they can read actually *can* read.
- Not all people who can read actually *do.*

- Not all people who do read can read *well.*
- Not all people who read well read the Bible.
- Not all people who read the Bible do so regularly.

Ansre projected that only about eleven percent of the reported literate population of almost any country read Scriptures regularly (Ansre 1995:66).

The traditional expectation of translators has been to translate the Bible in print form and start a literacy program, assuming that people would then be able to read and understand the Gospel message. However, realization has not always mirrored expectation, as oral societies have not transitioned to literacy as quickly as anticipated. (Porter 1995:105). This observation parallels Ong's claim that, historically, societal transition to literacy has been a slow process (Ong 1982:115). In reality, some people never become literate (Brown 1995:16). Among those are the poor who must invest their time in meeting basic needs, those who work long hours and have neither time nor stamina for literacy classes, the older people in a community, the nomadic, and people who are blind, crippled and educationally impaired (Malmstrom 1991:12-13).

While literacy has never been set forth by the church as a prerequisite to becoming a Christian, Ansre wrote, "The model that evolved during the Gutenberg Era is that the ideal Christian should be able to read and diligently study the Scriptures by reading regularly." However, despite years of literacy education in many areas, there are still few readers. In fact, according to Ansre the annual population growth in some areas is higher than annual literacy growth, meaning literacy rates are declining in those areas (Ansre 1995:65).

In Africa, Klem reported that in many areas the relatively few Christians who became literate came to form “a new elite” in their societies (Klem 1982:34). These were usually younger people, and this created conflict within the society because the young people do not traditionally hold leadership roles. However, they were given those roles even though they did not know their own people’s stories and oral art, a traditional requirement for leadership. Young pastors were now teaching the older men (Klem 1982:40). Elders often resisted asking Christ to forgive their sins, saying they were too old to learn to read; literacy had become so closely associated with Christianity, that those who could not read believed they could not become Christians (Klem 1982:37). Some elders began to pretend they could read in order to take part in church services; one man was found holding his hymnal upside down (Klem 1982:38). Klem wrote, “It is impossible to know how many other Christians in Africa have been humiliated for their inability to read well when they should have been encouraged to memorize the Word and display the Christian gifts they had already attained…” (Klem 1982:39).

Literacy has have been viewed as the means by which receptors can access the word in their mother tongue. According to Wayne Dye, one translation goal is that “anyone who wants to read the Scriptures will be able to read them” (Dye 1985:21) with the ultimate end of “deriv[ing] spiritual benefit from them” (Dye 1985:22). However, the research indicating that oral communicators do not think or learn in the same way as literates suggests that the expectation of literacy on the part of translators is actually in some cases a barrier to the Scriptures. Consider a statistic quoted by Viggo Søgaard, who said “less than half the world’s population can be reached by printed Scriptures today”

(Søgaard 1995:72). This is even more significant than the number of people who *prefer* oral communication; it points to roughly 3 billion people who *cannot be reached* through print.

Access and spiritual benefit are truly the goals of a translation, and all other goals are tied to these. Translators, then, must evaluate their own intentions and have comparable goals for literates and oral communicators with regard to access and spiritual benefit. Everyone should have access to his translation in culturally appropriate ways, and in the language and mode (print or oral) that he understands best.

In many cases a written translation makes perfect sense. At least for literate translators it is probably easier than an oral translation, and it is what Western translators know. Regarding benefits of a written translation, Gilbert Ansre wrote that print ensures fidelity to the form and content of message, has been highly effective in evangelism and teaching, and is potentially long-lived (Ansre 1995:65). With current technology, on the other hand, it seems likely that orality can match or even surpass the effectiveness of the written Word among oral communicators in all three categories.

Literacy has certain other advantages, among them “enlightening people, broadening outlooks and facilitating economic development” (Dye 1985:221). However, when translators evaluate their goals for producing a translation, is the potential for a broader outlook and prosperity worth the risk of hindering oral communicators’ access to the Scriptures? Of course, Dye also stated that literacy’s greatest benefit is enabling people to read the Bible (Dye 1985:223). When people prefer oral communication even

to the point of resisting literacy, however, literacy strategy becomes a barrier between receptors and their vernacular Scriptures.

The primary translation strategy involves a written translation and literacy education, but in less developed areas, especially Africa, literacy rates are low, so as Philip Stine wrote, "…in general we are devoting our energies to preparing Scriptures for a minority of the population" (Stine 1980:419).

Translators should consider carefully the extent of orality in their receptor language groups and ask the following questions. How many people in this language group are oral communicators? What is their attitude toward literacy? Even if a positive attitude exists, are some people unlikely to become literate in their lifetime? How many? Do the numbers warrant a special translation that will be attainable and enjoyable to these folks? If so, what form should that translation take?

As Klem (1995) termed it, "dependence on literacy strategy" has caused some problems in Bible translation. The assumption that all people should be literate is well intentioned but egocentric, when more than half of the world's population prefers to communicate orally rather than via print. Written translations prevent oral communicators from having full access to God's Word; certainly their access is not comparable to that of literates. Current knowledge and technology are sufficient to provide an oral translation for the estimated four billion oral communicators. When the majority of a population cannot read, and doubtfully ever will, why not consider an alternative to literacy strategy?

1.4 Research Question

Once translators understand how people communicate in oral societies and the necessity for reaching them in the way they understand best, how can they produce a translation that will provide oral communicators access to the Scripture without dependence on literacy strategy?

1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the extent that it is based on research gathered from the classroom studies, discussions with colleagues, and literature on the topic, and not from my own field data. Based on the research, I am predicting the factors that would contribute to a good translation for oral communicators. The predictions need to be tested on the field, as such testing would render the study more reliable.

1.6 Definition of Terms

A number of technical terms are used in this thesis, with the definitions given here.

Literacy (See section 1.3.1 for a discussion on the definition of this term.)

Literacy strategy is the method of communicating the Bible that depends on the receptors being literate so they can read the printed Scriptures (adapted from Klem 1995:59).

Literate people depend on reading/writing for most of their communication. Brown refers to these people as “print communicators” (Brown 2004:122).

Literature refers to written texts (Ong 1982:10-11).

Nonliterate people are oral communicators, used in preference to "preliterate," which assumes condescendingly that people are not inferior in their "illiteracy" by virtue of the fact that they will someday become literate. This term is used in this study only when differentiating on the basis of literacy skills.

Oral communicators are those who depend mostly on verbal, non-print means to learn, to communicate with others, to express themselves and to enjoy a story (Brown 2004:122).

Oral cultures are those in which oral communications are typical, although some people may be literate (Brown 2004:122).

Oral skills include the ability to memorize, compose oral art forms and communicate orally (Brown 1995:35).

Oral traditions are bodies of knowledge, including that which is passed down orally from past generations and currently created oral narratives in spoken or song format (McKinney 1996:2).

Orality is "the reliance on spoken, rather than written, language for communication" (Lovejoy, forthcoming).

Orature is the oral collection of hymns, myths, stories, etc. Except when an alternate term has been used by a particular author (Klem 1982, for example, uses "oral art," referring primarily to performed orature), this term will be used rather than the oxymoronic "oral literature"; "literature" by definition refers to written texts (Lahaye 2003:401).

Primary oral communicators are ones who have not become literate or at least do not read (Brown 2004:122).

Primary oral cultures are cultures in which most people are not literate (Brown 2004:122).

Primary orality is the orality of “persons totally unfamiliar with writing” (Ong 1982:6).

Written traditions are the collections of written texts, including those passed down for a long time and currently created ones (adapted from Kilham 1987:36).

CHAPTER 2– REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Universal Differences between Written and Oral Style

For perhaps as long as there has been a written tradition, people have been discussing the differences between the styles of written and spoken language. The questions raised are whether differences between written and spoken style exist, what those differences are, and what the implications are. In the *Phaedrus*, Plato had Socrates describe the spoken word as "the living word of knowledge which has a soul, and of which written word is properly no more than an image." He argued that, as a husbandman who plants his seeds in the heat of summer to see them sprout a week later does so only for fun and not in serious, so a thinker will not "'write' his thoughts 'in water' with pen and ink, sowing words which can neither speak for themselves nor teach the truth adequately to others." It would require a "very simple person," according to Plato, to consider writing "at all better than knowledge and recollection of the same matters" (Plato).

More recently, Sherri Rae Clark summarized the debate as it had occurred up to the early 1980s. Citing the work of cognitive scientists like Teun van Dijk (1977) and Walter Kintsch (1977), linguists such as Kenneth Pike (1964), psycholinguist Kenneth Goodman (1982), and sociologist William Corsaro (1983), Clark said, "The most common perspective sees little or no significant difference between speech and writing" (Clark 1984:1).

On the other hand, people in fields such as rhetoric, anthropology and philosophy have argued that speech and writing are considerably distinct. Clark mentioned in particular Marshall McLuhan (1964), Jack Goody (1977) and Walter Ong (1977). While these authors agree that literacy transforms the way people think, Clark said they disagree on the source of the differences (Clark 1984:4). However, she summarized the distinctions brought about by literacy that these authors have postulated:

- Print either made possible or necessitated
- A historical time sense
- Alienation from the present, lived moment
- Development of dispassionate analysis
- Separation of the individual from the group
- Abstract, formal systems of thought
- Decontextualization of meaning (Clark 1984:7).

Scribner and Cole concluded from their research, however, that schooling, not literacy per se, caused these apparent differences in thought processes. They said that schooling forces students to learn outside of natural contexts and decontextualizes meaning for them. Literacy, then, must be defined by the "set of socially organized practices which make use of a symbol system" (Scribner and Cole 1981:236). Clark sided with Scribner and Cole and concluded that tagmemics holds the key in the development of "philosophies of language" (Clark 1984:10).

Clark's summary did not cover Ong's later book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, his most famous work and perhaps the most influential book

on this subject. Ong examined the research and various writings of predecessors and contemporaries like McLuhan, Alfred Lord, Milman Parry and Eric Havelock, and he made some bold assertions.

Ong described characteristics of cognition and expression among primary oral communicators as follows:[3]

- Additive, not subordinative (Ong 1982:37)
- Aggregative, not analytic, relying on formulas to assist memory (Ong 1982:38)
- Redundant or "copious" (Ong 1982:39)
- Conservative or traditionalist, designed to preserve the traditions (Ong 1982:41)
- Close to the human lifeworld (Ong 1982:42)
- Agonistically toned, "situat[ing] knowledge within a context of struggle" (Ong 1982:43-44)
- Empathetic and participatory, rather than objectively distanced (Ong 1982:45)
- Homeostatic, "sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance" (Ong 1982:46)
- Situational, rather than abstract (Ong 1982:49).

[3] Ong was not writing about the differences between written and spoken style of literate people. Rather, his work concerned the differences between written language and the oral style of people who were not literate (Ong 1982:6).

For the final point, Ong cited A.R. Luria's (1976) important research on cognitive development of oral communicators. Ong applied all these broad and largely abstract characteristics universally to oral communicators.

Ong rejected the idea that stories are memorized verbatim in oral cultures. He countered that stories are comprised of a variety of formulas, particularly epithets, stitched together, and that originality involves joining the formulas in a new and creative way. This, he said, is the only way to memorize without written words. "…Formulaic style marks not poetry alone but, more or less, all thought and expression in primary oral culture" (Ong 1982:26). An English example of an epithet is "the big, bad wolf." In almost every well-known American children's story involving a wolf, he is both big and bad.

Since oral cultures don't allow for recall through written words, Ong said their members must think in mnemonic patterns. Besides formulas, helpful memory tools include "heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns… repetitions or antitheses… alliterations or assonances… standard thematic settings… [and] proverbs" (Ong 1982:34).

According to Ong, some oral cultures do not even have a word for "word"—although they might have one for "utterance"—showing they regard words in accordance with the way they come together to describe a situation. Literate cultures view words as individual things, but Ong asked, "If you cannot write, is 'text-based' one word or two?" (Ong 1982:61).

Speech is a natural phenomenon, Ong said, while writing is artificial (Ong 1982:82). Writing, then, is technology (Ong 1982:81). It begins as a craft in many

cultures, when a few literate people are hired by others to write letters or documents (Ong 1982:94). Ong paints a picture in which, as more people learn to read and write, the culture begins to shift. The characteristics used above to describe oral speech begin to disappear. Writing discourages formulaic expression, and people lose the ability to memorize long stories because they no longer use the familiar epithets. Rhetoric, a valued skill in oral cultures, loses esteem. Analytical thinking comes into vogue.

While speaking involves interaction between two or more people, reading and writing are solitary activities, unless someone reads aloud (Ong 1982:74-75). With literacy, then, comes the need for more privacy than is preferred in oral cultures. Obviously, this is a cultural shift. Ong did point out that writing is not "the sole cause of all changes" within a culture and said, "Orality is not an ideal…" (Ong 1982:175). However, he leaves his readers with the sense that oral cultures have much to value and, with the advent of literacy and especially print technology, much to lose.

Using Ong's research, Rick Brown (1995) summarized the specific and more concrete differences between print and oral communication. A table of his summary can be found in appendix A.

Citing several articles published from the 1970s forward regarding oral and written style in translation, Christine Kilham wrote that expatriate translators who studied cultures with very recent written traditions or none at all concluded that speakers within these cultures have an "innate feel" for the need to use different styles for oral and written language. Features edited out of written texts not only accounted for too much redundancy, but included grammatical and phonological effects, like ideophones (Kilham

1987:37). Carla Bartsch also commented on this, saying even oral communicators have a "sense of how written text should sound" (Bartsch 1997:46).

Thirty-five years ago, Bruce Adams wrote about how differences between written and spoken style affect translation in specific ways. Working with the Wolaamo[4] language, which at the time had no written tradition, he studied differences between an original fable as told by a local storyteller and the transcription after being edited by a more educated Wolaamo. Adams noticed three types of changes the editor made: corrections of the storyteller's obvious mistakes, deletions of redundancy and stylistic changes, and changes in the story's content (Adams 1972:28).

The first type of change requires little explanation: the storyteller occasionally misspoke, then typically self-corrected, and the editor removed the mistake. Adams attributed stylistic changes to the elimination of redundancy and, perhaps, added emphasis. The story's content was changed to remove markers indicating the beginning and end of the fable and a parenthetic paragraph (Adams 1972:28-29).

Adams did not make recommendations or even draw any conclusions about the significance of these changes. However, he raised several relevant questions. He wondered which form (original or edited) the Wolaamo listeners would prefer to hear as it is read aloud, and which they would prefer to read. Would the audience miss any of the deleted features in either aural or written form? Why did the editor make these deletions? Finally, would a more newly literate person have made the same changes?

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[4] This language is now called Wolaytta.

2.2 No Universal Differences between Written and Oral Style

Although widely respected, Ong's work has not been the final word in the debate. The problem with making claims of universality is that only one example of the contrary is needed to disprove those claims. Researchers who disagree with Ong have offered examples that seem to contradict his conclusions. Douglas Biber listed generalizations from previous research, specifically that, when compared to speech, writing tends to be the following:

- More structurally complex and elaborate
- More explicit
- More decontextualized
- Less personally involved, more detached and abstract
- Characterized by more new information
- More deliberately organized (Biber 1988:47).

Biber said that, while the first two generalizations are more widely accepted (48), the others are "inadequate as absolute differences between speech and writing." And while they may apply to some written and oral genres, he said, "They are not adequate as proposals concerning general linguistic differences between the two modes" (Biber 1988:49).

Citing Biber and Niko Besnier (1995), Lourens de Vries summarized the argument against the existence of universal differences. De Vries stated that "the present consensus in discourse studies is that there is no proof for absolute differences between literate and oral societies (in terms of thinking or type of discourse)" (de Vries 2000:101).

Based on his own research from New Guinea, de Vries said that New Guinean clause-chaining languages include subordination within the morphology, insisting that this feature discredits Ong's notion of oral language being additive in nature (de Vries 2000:104). His examples also imply that formulaic style isn't the only method for memorizing texts, as some oral cultures utilize ritual actions, masks, woodcarvings and food taboos to assist in memorizing texts (de Vries 2000:106).

De Vries stated that the New Guinean languages he analyzed contained "frequent recapitulative linkage devices," and he considered their "leaving out known inferable information" to be "the avoidance of redundancy" (de Vries 2000:106-107). However, these seem to be separate issues. Even Biber acknowledged "the generalization that writing is decontextualized, while speech is contextualized," meaning that participants in an act of oral communication share a common context, but writers must include more of the original context in their communication to ensure it is understood by their more detached readers (Biber 1988:47-48). Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen said that adding context "is a characteristic of literate communicators rather than oral communicators" (Tannen 1980:84). If a context is clearly known to all participants, then that context would not need to be repeated or explicitly stated. Therefore, de Vries' assertion that the New Guineans omitted "known inferable information" actually supports the assumption of contextualization, rather than negating the assumption of redundancy, in oral speech.

In summary, de Vries argued that "very few universal claims about primary orality can stand the New Guinea test" (de Vries 2000:107), although his arguments

clearly refuted only two of Ong's claims: those of additive parataxis and formulaic devices.

2.3 An Oral/Literate Continuum

Tannen gave a simplified overview of the research on oral and literate traditions. She wrote, "Strategies associated with oral tradition place emphasis on shared knowledge and the interpersonal relationship between communicator and audience" (Tannen 1982:2). Literate tradition, on the other hand, emphasizes "the use of words to convey information or content." She feels the distinctions offered by Ong and others do not refer to orality versus literacy per se; instead, there is a continuum in communication with regard to relative focus on interpersonal involvement versus message content (Tannen 1982:15).

Tannen identified strategies that, when employed, influence a text's position along the continuum. These included fixity (formulaicness) vs. novelty of expression, personalization vs. generalization (Tannen 1982:6), and internal (contextualized) vs. external (stating everything necessary for comprehension) evaluation (Tannen 1982:8-9). She found that highly literate people often use oral strategies (Tannen 1982:13). Tannen claimed that a literate tradition does not replace the oral and that "no individual is either 'oral' or 'literate,'" but people use features associated with both modes in various settings (Tannen 1982:3). Along the same lines, Ong himself said orality is never "completely eradicable" (Ong 1982:175).

Chafe also researched the role of involvement in distinguishing written and oral communication, concluding that "…certain differences in the processes of speaking and

writing have led to specific differences in the two products, spoken and written language" (Chafe 1982:35).

According to Chafe, oral and written language differ with regard to two sets of features. First, written language tends to be integrated, whereas spoken language is fragmented (Chafe 1982:38-39). Second, writers are typically detached from their readers, while speakers are more or less involved with their hearers (Chafe 1982:45).

What Chafe termed "oral literature," or ritual language, shares characteristics with written language in that it is less fragmented than conversation and the performer is more detached from the audience than are the speakers from other participants in colloquial speech. Because of these noted similarities between oral literature and written language, Chafe concluded that in oral cultures the differences between colloquial and ritual language in many ways parallel the differences between spoken and written language (Chafe 1982:52).

Christine Kilham summarized the continuum argument by saying, "…It is not so much clear-cut distinctions between written and oral modes…but a difference of degree in the use of certain features." She elaborated, "…Even the spoken parts of written texts may be a bit less spoken than in real speech…" (Kilham 1987:40).

Similarly, based on her study of the Limba language in West Africa, Ruth Finnegan concluded that "the distinction commonly made between literate and non-literate societies may not be as clear-cut as is often assumed" (Finnegan 1988:58).

To summarize, there are conflicting positions on the topic of differences between written and spoken language. Some scholars hold that universal differences exist, others

believe they do not, and still others argue for a continuum or language-specific differences.

2.4 Implications of Differences on Ministry in General and Translation in Particular

Drawing on his experiences with the Yoruba in Nigeria, Herbert Klem described the characteristics of an African oral communication system. Klem's claims are listed with some explanation below:

- Oral communication, he said, places high value on the "florid phrases" of artistic speech, such that verbal skills are a means for improving one's social status (Klem 1982:111-112).
- There is a strong belief in the power of words, even the power to cause what is said to come true (Klem 1982:113-114). Ong said that oral communicators "commonly and in all likelihood universally consider words to have magical potency" (Ong 1982:32).
- Oral arts, like praise recitations and poetry, may be as appreciated for their cultural function as for their beauty. For example, the Yoruba praises and praise songs are not just entertaining art. They play an important role in celebrations of life and memorializing the dead, two important features of Yoruba culture (Klem 1982:114-118). Jan Vansina said performances of oral art are tied to an institutional framework, and both genre and content are related to the occasion (Vansina 1985:95). Every message has a purpose and a function (Vansina 1985:100).

- Phonological tones affect the sound and structure of oral art and should be considered when composing oral texts in tonal languages (Klem 1982:117).
- Artistic creativity involves flexibility in the retelling. "It is the western expectation of fixity that prevents a more accurate appreciation of what oral presentation is all about," Klem wrote. In African oral art, while elements like character and plot remain constant, the form may vary with each telling (Klem 1982:118). However, some texts are more fixed than others, such as those containing religious elements and related to the origin of the tribe, as well as genealogies with historic content (Klem 1982:119-120).
- Ideophones are a necessary component of African oral art. For example, in Yoruba a blow from a spear or fist sounds something like "VVIVVIVVIM." The sounds combine with the manner and posture with which they are uttered, allowing the speaker to express feelings associated with the actions being described. Presentations without ideophones are unnatural (Klem 1982:122).
- The focus of oral presentation is its non-verbal communication more than its vocabulary and complex word structure (Klem 1982:123).
- African oral art is characterized by an abundance of poetic imagery and metaphor (Klem 1982:124).
- Finally, audience participation is essential (Klem 1982:147).

Klem said these characteristics of African oral art are significant not simply as descriptors of the way people communicate. They are vastly important because the art of oral communicators is a symbol of their cultural identity and ethnic cohesion. The orature itself is important in promoting cultural values and social control (Klem 1982:102-103). In a similar vein, Carol McKinney wrote that oral traditions are used "as a means of entertainment, transmission of culture, and education in moral and social values" (McKinney 1996:8).

Klem encouraged the production of written Bible translations. Noting that some Bible characters were instructed to write what God spoke to them, Klem inferred, "It is God's desire that there be a written text" (Klem 1982:xxi). However, because of the preponderance of oral technique within the New Testament, Jesus's own oral ministry, and God's having Moses teach the people a poem so they could remember what He had done, Klem remarked that there is Biblical basis for "popular distribution of the Scriptures via memorization" (Klem 1982:xxii).

Klem feels that, where a vital oral communication system already exists, missionaries and target peoples alike would benefit from taking advantage of it (Klem 1982:xix). He boldly asserted, "it is simply not possible to effectively reach most of our present generation with a written message" (Klem 1982:xvii).

In section 1.3.4, some problems that can arise when the message of the Gospel is introduced into an oral culture via literacy strategy were discussed. Those problems have serious implications for ministry in general, and translation in particular, especially as they can lead to disastrous results.

To review and amplify, Klem said that people often equate Christianity and literacy. Those who view themselves as too old or unable to learn to read think they cannot become Christians. The young people become literate and Christian, yet they are not culturally positioned to affect change in a community that has extreme respect for its elders. The elders in the community are shamed because they cannot read, and sometimes they will fake literacy in order to save face. Finally, sometimes literacy, because it threatens the oral communication system and a group's way of life, is rejected altogether —as is the Christianity associated with it (Klem 1982:37-38). Another problem is that, because practical literacy is so completely removed from the everyday lives of oral communicators, after their formal schooling is complete they very often return to their preliterate, oral method of communication. They no longer read and perhaps even forget how (Klem 1982:39). Although presumed literate, they cannot access a written Bible.

Grant Lovejoy chaired the committee that authored the Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 54, published in 2005 as *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*. The book addresses how and why Christians should reach out to oral communicators. The committee said that reading and writing are based on oral communication, but "when literacy persists in a culture for generations, it begins to change the way people think, act, and communicate." Eventually literates cannot recognize oral style or how different it is from their own written style. Then they try to evangelize oral communicators from their literate style. This makes understanding God's message very difficult for oral communicators. And even when the message is recorded, the audio presentation of a

literate-styled message is difficult for an oral communicator to understand (International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee 2005:5). Therefore, the communication of God's Word must be modified in order to meet the needs of oral communicators (International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee 2005:6).

The committee insisted that, "for a spiritual movement to be engaged, we must consciously choose strategies that oral learners can easily reproduce" (International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee 2005:42). They suggested storytelling as a powerful strategy for enabling oral communicators to learn and reproduce Scripture (International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee 2005:43). This strategy has implications for Bible translation, particularly with regard to the role of narrative in an oral translation, as will be discussed in section 2.8.

2.5 Intended Use of Scripture Drives the Translation Process

Just as authors have debated the existence of universal differences between written and spoken language, so a discussion flourishes vis-à-vis the extent of orality/literacy in ancient Israel and among the Jews of Jesus' time. Morris Watkins referred to the Jews before and around the time of Christ as "people of the Book" (Watkins 1978:12) and considered their identity to be inextricably bound to their possession of and ability to read the texts of the Law and the Prophets. He argued that a highly valued literate tradition made that time "perfect" for the "advancement of the Gospel of our Redeemer" (Watkins 1978:1-2). Niditch argued that ancient Israelites

were increasingly literate, but that the evidence for their literacy did not contradict the "oral mentality"[5] that is evident even from their writings (Niditch 1996:44).

On the other hand, Werner Kelber, who examined the Gospel of Mark in light of the characteristics of oral style put forth by Ong and others, concluded that Mark was written after the stories about and teachings of Christ had been repeated orally for many years, and that the writing of Mark reflects the oral style of that tradition (Kelber 1983:21, 44-45, 90). Harry Gamble contended that the majority of early Christians, and, indeed, the Greco-Roman population at large, were not literate, although more Jews than Gentiles could read. He claimed the latter was probably due to the historical importance of Jewish education in both the written and oral Torah (Gamble 1995:5-7). Because of a paradoxically high value on texts, however, nonliterates had "access to literacy" through public readings and performances (Gamble 1995:8).

Yorke stated that the New Testament world was both literate and oral but "with a strong bias toward the oral," since 80-90 percent of the Greco-Roman population could not read or write in either Hellenistic Greek or Latin (Yorke 2003:335).

It is not within the scope of the present work to delve very deeply into that discussion, although it is interesting to note that Klem felt the discussion on the orality/literacy situation in Bible times was vital in answering whether an approach geared toward oral communicators was "Biblical" (Klem 1982:xix). The similarities he

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[5] Niditch described an "oral mentality" as characterized by five traits: Writing is often used for "short, pragmatic messages"; "magical, transformative qualities" are attributed to writing; written texts are seen as "monumental or iconic rather than a means of keeping records…"; it is possible to manage well in life without literacy skills; and people rely on oral communication, with hints of orality evident even in written texts, so that knowledge of the oral world is necessary in order to fully appreciate or understand them.

discovered between the situation of Christ's time and that of modern Africa "indicate how fruitful and right it is for us to imitate the communicative policies of Jesus as we minister in Africa" (Klem 1982:xx).

Ernst Wendland felt the relevant question concerned the "kind of presentation… the original authors [had] in mind when they composed their works." He contended that the Biblical texts were composed for oral presentation, citing Old Testament examples of the Scriptures being read aloud to large groups of people (Wendland 1993:27) and New Testament examples where *hearing* the Word is emphasized. A discourse analysis of parts of the New Testament confirms the preponderance of spoken style, according to Wendland. He wrote, "Reading [aloud] the inspired messages composed by the apostles for the admonition and edification of believers far and wide was the only practical means available at the time for reaching the large numbers who were coming to Christ" (Wendland 1993:28).

If, as Wendland said, the original Biblical texts were composed for oral presentation because public reading was the "only practical means" for reaching large numbers of believers with "the inspired messages" at that time, then translating the Bible with oral use in mind should be considered today as a means by which the large numbers of oral communicators can have access to those same messages. As Lovejoy (Lovejoy, forthcoming) pointed out, Jesus was in the habit of "speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it" (Mk. 4:33).

These authors would tell translators that the intended use of a translation should influence every decision about how it is produced, especially if making that translation

fully accessible to the receptor group in culturally appropriate ways is the goal. A translator should first try to understand how his audience can best *use* the translation, and then allow this understanding to drive the translation process.

SIL's focus on strategic planning, as explained by Doris Porter, emphasizes this point. Porter wrote, "We used to think of non-print media as an 'add-on' to the language program… Audiocassettes, for example, were mainly used to put Scripture on tape for the non-reading audience. Not a lot of thought was given to how Scripture portions might be programmed to better fit the audience" (Porter 1995:105). She said that now non-print media are becoming very effective in reaching long-term goals related to the project, and distribution, use and evaluation are planned components (Porter 1995:106).

Lovejoy said, "The stakes are too high for us to misunderstand our audience's capacities and preferences with respect to orality and literacy" (Lovejoy, forthcoming).

2.6 Addressing the Question of Orality in Translation

With such high stakes, what is being proposed or done to communicate God's message to oral communicators? Following are some examples of the multiplicity of efforts in various languages, presented in generally chronological order from date of publication. They include both translation and Scripture use strategies.

In 1980 Philip Stine reported that since 1972 the United Bible Societies had been seeking new ways to reach new readers, including graded texts that help readers build their literacy skills, and producing Scriptures in cartoon or comic format (Stine 1980:419). He described an experiment in providing audio Scriptures in the Wolof

language of Senegal. Some mission leaders held a meeting and reached the following conclusions:

- Since 90 percent of the Wolof people are Muslims, Old Testament material would be more appealing for audio Scriptures than New Testament.
- However, the message of the Gospel should be included.
- Rather than simply translated passages read aloud, narrative material should be reworked into dramatic episodes with dialogue and narration.
- The material could be recorded on cassettes and sold together with printed Scriptures, and also used on the radio.

The Genesis passages about Abraham already had been translated and were being prepared for publication, so the translation teams felt these could easily be reworked for an oral audience. Two other factors came into play in choosing which episodes to include. First, the Wolof people are very interested in genealogies, so it seemed they would want to know Abraham's. They restructured this material into the style used by *griots*, or traditional historians. Second, Muslims believe that Ishmael was the son Abraham was instructed to sacrifice, and thusly the son of the promise, so the stories regarding Ishmael and Isaac and Abraham's test are particularly pertinent to this audience (Stine 1980:420).

The teams included introductions to each episode they chose in the story of Abraham. They gave all the passages they wanted to include in the audio translation to someone known for creative writing, who then prepared complete scripts with dialogue

and narration. Some of the translated print passages remained the same, others were shortened, and to some explanatory or bridge material was added (Stine 1980:421).

At the time of this article's publication, the portions had not been tested, so Stine did not include any information about the success of the experiment.

Christine Kilham wrote that oral communicators quickly develop a written style after seeing their language on paper. Her experience among the Wik-Mungkan in Australia gave her some insight on this topic. Wik-Mungkan utilizes various grammatical devices used to mark prominence, which Kilham included in her written translation in order to match the naturalness of the language. Kilham was surprised to learn that the Wik-Mungkan speakers preferred fewer and more selectively used prominence markers in their written texts. She reported that this phenomenon occurred with equal frequency among some other Australian Aboriginal languages, viz. Kriol and Pitjantjatjara, with regard to emphasis suffixes and particles.

Despite the preference for fewer prominence markers in written texts, Kilham noted that, in all cases, native speakers added back the deleted markers when reading the text aloud (Kilham 1987:38-39). It is interesting that, no matter how the native speakers wanted their written text to *look*, they clearly wanted it to *sound* like the familiar oral style to which they are accustomed (Kilham 1987:45).

Kilham said that, while literacy must not be presented as in opposition to orality, translators should not assume that Christian maturity is impossible without literacy. Still, she insisted on the need to implement literacy and creative writing programs in the early stages of a project, so that an "acceptable written style" can develop. Contrariwise, she

argued against viewing oral approaches as "nothing more than… hoped-for stepping stones to literacy." God's Word is needed in a variety of media, Kilham said, to provide access to all different kinds of people (Kilham 1987:46). It seems that a single translation of the Bible may not prove satisfactory for two or more distinct audiences—such as one who prefers an oral version and one who prefers written text—although Kilham made a valid point in saying that "no society presents a totally homogeneous audience," and some compromise is always necessary (Kilham 1987:47).

Like Stine's graded texts, Kilham also suggested "layers" of introduction to the written Bible, moving people from overviews to summaries to full translations (Kilham 1987:46-47). She listed three potential approaches to translating the Bible for oral audiences. Those approaches are discussed in section 3.2.

Kilham discussed one aspect of oral language not often emphasized in the debate over the differences between oral and written style: prosody. Intonation, voice quality, change in speech tempo, gestures, etc., convey meaning just as words do (Kilham 1987:37). Wendland argued that, since most people today are exposed to Scripture by hearing it, "the biblical message in spoken form deserves a much greater attention than it has had, including a thorough study of features relating to typography and arrangement" (Wendland 1993:30). He offered very specific ways for tailoring a written translation that is both meaningful and "readable" orally, that is, adding recognizable prosodic clues for public readers.

The goal of a written translation designed for oral use is "interpretive reading," said Wendland, and someone who does not fully understand the text will not read fluently

or accurately (Wendland 1993:37). He identified three resources to assist in producing a more readable translation: typography, format and punctuation. Providing an example from Chewa, a Central African Bantu language, Wendland contended that a display reflecting the structure of a passage helps the public reader better understand, and thusly communicate, that passage. Indicating speech rhythm also assists in overall communication (Wendland 1993:38).

Some punctuation marks and typographic conventions can be used to contribute to the overall readability of a written text for public readers. According to Wendland, it is beneficial to clearly mark direct quotations, which can be done via quotation marks, indented new lines, wider columns and ragged right margins (Wendland 1993:33-36). He recommended using typographic formatting, such as indentation, to distinguish between contrasting concepts, and different fonts, for example, to highlight key terms or other "parallelistic and contrastive forms of expression." By employing these techniques, one can also reflect the organization of a passage, improving comprehensibility for the public reader.

Punctuation can also assist as a guide to enunciation, Wendland said, as in the practice of using commas and periods for short and long pauses. He cautioned, however, that improper use of such devices may actually confuse a reader (Wendland 1993:36). Besides these, he suggested dashes or double hyphens for marking "rhetorical pauses," those added to create effect, and the marking of "rhythmic speech units." The latter refers to the division of speech into utterances, one per line, following the natural flow of the receptor language (Wendland 1993:38-39).

Other reader-friendly features Wendland listed are as follows:

- a clear type style
- dark ink
- larger type size
- a sufficient amount of interlinear spacing
- more white space on the page
- a format reproducing key aspects of the discourse organization of the pericope in question (Wendland 1993:38).

Some external factors, such as finances and the preference and literary skills of the receptor language group, might influence the degree to which punctuation and typography can be utilized in an oral-styled translation. Wendland cautioned that compromises might be necessary to ensure maximum acceptability (Wendland 1993:43).

By 1995 the issue of orality had become focal enough among missions organizations that the International Journal of Frontier Missions dedicated its entire April-June edition to the subject of reaching oral communicators with the Gospel. Klem and Brown were among this edition's contributors.

Klem recounted how Yoruba villagers in Western Africa told him that they could not become Christians because they were too old, and how, in response, he decided to change his ministry strategy (Klem 1995:63). Some people had said the reason they were too old to become Christians was because they were too old to learn to read, having associated Christianity with literacy (Klem 1995:62). Klem's new strategy involved

providing Scriptures in a way that did not require people to be literate in order to access them.

With some of his students, Klem prepared a translation of the book of Hebrews using the short sentence structure of the local traditional poetry. A choirmaster arranged the wording and phrasing so the lines could be sung. The translation committee then checked for accuracy, and changes were made to ensure fidelity to the original. Then, choirs were recorded singing the first six chapters. These recorded passages from Hebrews were used in Bible study test groups of both readers and nonreaders to determine if people learned more from an oral approach.

One night Klem attended a study where many visitors had come. Concerned for the structure of his test group, Klem asked the visitors to leave—even though many were Muslim elders from the villages where Klem had been told they felt too old to become Christians. One elder, saying they were enjoying hearing God speak to them, suggested Klem be the one to leave. Klem remembered, "I was thrilled to have a Muslim man in a Bible study, and he was an elder leader, but I did not want to spoil the structure of the test." When Klem asked them to leave a second time, the elder challenged him to a "true test of ownership" of the tapes (Klem 1995:63). The person who could sing most of the Scripture from memory was the true owner, and the other person would leave. Since Klem could not win this indigenous ownership test, the group cheered and proclaimed the Muslim elder the owner of the Bible tapes!

Klem said the oral Scriptures had been accepted by even the Muslim elder because "it had been identified with his culture, employing art forms that marked it as his

cultural property." The man was able to bond with God's Word because he identified with the form of the message. Rather than calling Christianity a foreign religion, as some had done before, the Yoruba were declaring that the tapes belonged to them, and Klem was the outsider. Klem concluded that the Bible on tape was a powerful tool that, if used wisely, "can reach all the people of the world with a solid understanding of the Word of God" (Klem 1995:64).

In his 1995 article, "Designing Programs for Oral Cultures," Richard Brown, a respected writer on the topic of translating for oral communicators, gave practical tips for translating and recording Scriptures for oral communicators. He used Ong's (1982) work as a guideline to understanding how they prefer to communicate.

Brown said an oral translation should be easy to speak, recite and memorize (Brown 1995:20). "The oral audience needs and appreciates narrative passages that illustrate God's qualities more than abstract statements about His qualities," he wrote. He described a method called chronological Bible storying, whereby a listener is led through the various events of the Bible in chronological order (Brown 1995:21), covering "the full breadth of the Biblical message" (Brown 1995:23). For translation, Brown said, that means starting with the Old Testament (Brown 1995:21). Genealogies are useful because they help to identify when events occur in relation to when certain people lived.

When oral communicators retell events, they usually tell stories about people in real-life situations, Brown said, rather than focusing on "places or principles or causes." With this in mind, the Asia Pacific Region of the UBS designed a series of recorded narratives about the Old Testament prophets, about whom many people in Eurasia are

interested to learn. Brown said these stories have been successful, piquing the interest of the audience who then becomes willing to hear stories about Jesus and others from the New Testament. At the time of the article's publication, the prophet series was being modified into biographies designed to present various themes with respect to the audience's worldview. Brown wrote, "In general, people who will not listen to exposition that contradicts their beliefs/world view will, nevertheless, listen to stories that exemplify themes that are contrary to their world view" (Brown 1995:22-23). As they listen to biographies from the Old (and then the New) Testament, they are developing a more Biblical worldview (Brown 2004:24).

One way of presenting Biblical stories so they are seen as relevant to the lives of oral communicators, Brown suggested, is to introduce the stories with a modern-day setting, like having a child ask a parent a question. The answer is the story. For example, in one of the prophet series tapes, the introduction is set at a birth and naming celebration. The host is asked why the child is being named Moses, so the story of Moses is told. In another example, the narrator's child sometimes interrupts the story to ask questions. "The explanations are the oral equivalent of footnotes and glossaries," Brown said, and the entire interaction mimics oral communication where storytelling is an interactive event. He cautioned on the importance of using settings that are culturally relevant, since oral communicators learn better if themes are tied to situations they can relate to from their own experiences (Brown 1995:24). Of course, while these products contain Scripture, the entire text could not be considered Scripture any more than print footnotes are Scripture. That fact should be made clear to audiences.

Since narratives are not the only genres comprising the Bible, Brown discussed how those other genres could be included in a translation or translated portions, such as with chronological Bible storying. Oral communicators relate more easily to psalms, proverbs and parables when they seem connected to real life than when presented in lists, he said. Brown recommended embedding them, along with exposition, as much as possible in narratives. For example, selected portions from the epistles can be embedded in the narratives of Acts (Brown 1995:24-25).

One group putting the storytelling approach to work is OneStory, a partnership including Campus Crusade for Christ, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Trans World Radio, Wycliffe International and YWAM. Through OneStory, people are trained to create "story sets" with mother tongue speakers. These sets of 40 to 60 Bible stories are designed to be sensitive to the receptor group's worldview and give a chronological view of the Bible story. They are not embellished accounts but are faithful to the Biblical text. According to the OneStory website, "These story sets form the beginnings of an 'oral Bible' to be told and retold for generations" (OneStory Partnership).

Along the lines of Kilham from a decade earlier, Bartsch suggested producing translations that work for both oral and literate audiences and could be produced to serve for silent reading as well as public reading, audio recordings, quoting from memory in sermons and conversations, and dramatic presentations like the *Jesus* film (Bartsch 1997:41). She argued that people tend to prefer written style to oral style for their Bible translations, so translators should try to employ the written style of the receptor

language.[6] However, she emphasized that "*those characteristics of oral style which make the Scriptures useful orally as well as when read silently need to be incorporated*" (Bartsch 1997:43, italics in original). Bartsch summed up:

> A translator first needs to determine what the differences are between oral and written style in his target language. Then Scriptures can be produced in a written style which incorporates whatever features of oral style may be needed for oral situations. One must be careful to not make the written form unacceptable in the process, however, by wording it in a way that doesn't "sound right" in writing (Bartsch 1997:44).

While Bartsch's approach to translation is mostly theoretical and dependent on the discovery of language-specific distinctions between oral and written style, she offered a few general tips. She recommended omitting from the written translation "false starts, digressions and colloquialisms" but retaining the "simpler sentence structure, slower flow of new information, and some of the stylistic devices" that typify oral communication (Bartsch 1997:46).

Sunil Mathew's methods in Dungra Bhil were similar to the approach proposed by Bartsch, starting with a written translation and editing it for oral style. He had translated portions of the Bible into this eastern Indian language. After ten years of literacy programs, Mathew was discouraged by an "almost complete lack of interest in learning to read our printed Scripture portions," so he sought ways to promote Scripture use (Mathew 2005:5). He decided to experiment with what he considered to be the Biblical approach—the public reading of Scriptures. This decision forced him to

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[6] Bartsch's work was heavily influenced by the idea that many differences between oral and written style are language specific (Bartsch 1997:43).

contemplate “the particular features of Bible translation that is intended for successful reading aloud by native speakers of the language” (Mathew 2005:6).

Mathew revised the translation of 1 Timothy to reflect the oral style of the Dungra Bhils. “In the process,” he wrote, “I realized that a balance must be struck between incorporating some features of the oral style into the written form, while at the same time not using oral style features that make the written form unacceptable to literates because it just doesn’t sound right in writing” (Mathew 2005:7). Like Kilham and Bartsch, he felt that his translation should serve both the literate few and the nonliterate masses (Mathew 2005:28). With this and the goal of public reading in mind, Mathew incorporated the following features of oral style into the revised translation:

- Shorter speech units to allow the reader to take frequent breaths
- Lower information load in each sentence to reduce processing effort for the hearer (Mathew 2005:38)
- Shorter and simpler sentence construction to reduce the “memory burden” on the hearer, who has to keep the first part of the sentence in mind “until he gets far enough along in it, so that it makes some sense”
- Direct speech (Mathew 2005:39)
- Inclusion of prominence markers (Mathew 2005:39-40)
- Omission of subject
- Minimization of loan words and increased use of Dungra Bhil idioms (Mathew 2005:40)
- Vocatives (Mathew 2005:40-41).

With these features included in the revised translation, Mathew tended to the needs of both the reader and the hearer.

The two translations were read aloud to native speakers, including males and females, Christians and non-Christians, literates and oral communicators. The revised, oral version was generally preferred to, and understood better than, the first. As a result of the testing, Mathew concluded that "for oral communities like Dungra Bhils, an aural-based translation of the Scripture that can be understood by an audience of *listeners* should be developed in contrast to a print-based translation that can be understood by an audience of *readers*." (Mathew 2005:52-53).

Mathew's incorporation of oral features will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.2.2.

2.7 Media—Techniques for Producing Audio/Video-Based Translation

Since one frequently mentioned method for providing Scriptures to oral communicators is the use of audio or video recordings, it would be advantageous to examine here some proposed techniques for ensuring translations are appropriately produced for use via audio/visual media. If Scripture use should drive the translation, then that means paying attention to the media in which it is to be produced, whether print, audio, visual, etc.[7]

Gilbert Ansre outlined a resolution made by United Bible Societies executives in Ghana in 1991. Following are a few of the points of the resolution:

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[7] In this text the words "aural" and "audio" do not necessarily exclude reference to audio-visual media.

- They asked the Bible Societies in Africa to prioritize audio-Scripture, devoting up to half the Africa budget to the effort.
- They requested the appointment of a full-time "Audio-Media Consultant" and audio-media staff in all societies.
- They asked the UBS to provide hardware enabling effective use of the software that would be produced.
- They asked that the Africa Regional Centre provide audio workshops and seminars for all National Societies (Ansre 1995:66-67).

Ansre reported that after the resolution was approved, several Bible Societies in the Africa Region initiated efforts to produce and distribute Scriptures orally. He described in particular the Pilot Audio Project, a collaboration between the Bible Society of Ghana and Hosanna[8] that involved recording the entire New Testament on cassettes and making them available to local church groups. Church leaders then organized listening parties in the churches or villages. The group met at least once a week, usually beginning with music and prayer and then listening to the tapes. After being taught and having the Scriptures explained, the group would have "active" discussions about the material presented.

The results from the project were very positive, Ansre reported. In Akuapim, 60 groups were initially started, reaching about 6,000 people. In Dagbani, spoken by members of a Muslim ethnic group, 97 listening groups were organized. From all

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[8] This organization, now called Faith Comes by Hearing, partners with other organizations to provide audio recordings of Scriptures in many languages.

indications, the tapes made a "significant impact" on Christians and non-Christians alike. Some church leaders reported hearing portions of the New Testament for the first time. Some Muslim leaders would gather to listen to the tapes before heading off to the mosque. Pastors and youth groups are finding the tapes particularly useful (Ansre 1995:67).

The third language involved in the project, Ewe, had a newly retranslated New Testament, although Ansre didn't comment on why the new translation was necessary, or whether it was produced for the new medium. A church planting organization was responsible for distributing the tapes among the nonliterate population. Ansre said the cassettes, which were played and taught from at church services, were well received. Even young people who previously avoided church would gather to listen to the tapes, finding them "trendy." Ansre concluded that enthusiasm for and interest in the oral-Scriptures were "extremely high" (Ansre 1995:67) and said that projects were planned for other languages. He claimed that oral use of Scripture is "the highest potential medium of outreach for the salvation message [in Africa] today and into the 21st century" (Ansre 1995:68).

Ansre is one of many who have written about the success of audio-Scriptures among oral societies. Paul Dyer (1995) wrote of Bible portions on cassette being produced in more than twenty languages in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of the Congo). Viggo Søgaard described Dr. Harvey Hoeskstra as a pioneer who was recording the New Testament onto tape cartridges in Ethiopia in the late 1960s. As a result of his initiative, thousands of Scripture cassettes were later sent to Russia, India, Indonesia, and

Lebanon, and generally to "the tribal peoples and the poor of the world," people "who have not had the opportunity to learn to read" (Søgaard 1995:73). Søgaard also told a moving story from Ghana, where at a church service villagers were asked how many had read the New Testament. Six of the roughly 120 adults present indicated that they had. After listening to four chapters from the book of John on cassette, the people were crying and asking what they needed to do (Søgaard 1995:71).

While Søgaard was impressed by the number of missionaries reaching out to oral communicators with audio-Scriptures, he remained concern that people not take the "easy route" and just record a written text, as is commonly the case (Søgaard 1995:73). He said, "A good audio-Scripture program will need a new translation made for the medium" (Søgaard 1995:72). Brown echoed the sentiment, stating, "It is not adequate just to read a literary translation onto tape. The translation must be designed and tested from the start to be suitable for audio presentation" (Brown 1995:29). As Julian Sundersingh put it, "The world of audio has its own rules and we need to play audio by its rules and not by the print-based rules" (Sundersingh 2001:54).

Bible translator Thomas Branks accidentally discovered one method of drafting a translation for use via audio media. He developed a technique for determining discourse features in Guambiano involving having a translation helper retell a text at least six times. The technique evolved after Branks realized that his helper required five repetitions before fixing her pattern on a particular difficult sentence, and then she kept that pattern throughout subsequent repetitions. Also, Branks noticed that after three tellings the texts

began to resemble each other in form, which he understood to mean the form was "rhetorically satisfying" to the translator (Branks 1976:14-15).

Although Branks developed the technique is order to analyze discourse features, he concluded that "its primary usefulness is as an approach to a good spoken style, a style we may use in our translations" for primary oral cultures. Years later, after literacy and a written style have taken hold on the language, native speakers may revise the translation to reflect the written style, if they choose (Branks 1976:17).

Karl Grebe translated for the Nso of Cameroon. Frustrated over the failure of his literacy program, Grebe implemented an audio-Scripture program. He recorded his translated books of Mark, Acts and 1 and 2 Thessalonians, then made "extensive revisions" to make them sound more natural. Grebe would read a sentence or part of a sentence, and a native speaker would repeat it. Anything that was difficult to say or remember would be recrafted to reflect natural speech, connectors were added between sentences and paragraphs, and the speaker often added speech particles that had been omitted from the written translation (Grebe 1981:15). Grebe was very concerned that the Nso should acquire literacy skills so that they could read the Bible, so while the goal of his technique was to lend naturalness to the translation, it was not to produce an oral translation for long-term use.

Grebe's technique is very much like the one recommended by Marilyn Malmstrom. In *My Tongue is the Pen,* Malmstrom offered practical tips for successfully integrating non-print media into a language program. She described reading a written translation on tape as "boring," and said idioms and oral features must be included to

make a translation natural and "listenable" (Malmstrom 1991:18). The "nonreader technique" provides a way for oral communicators to participate in the recording and leads to a product that is easier to listen to (Malmstrom 1991:142).

First, Malmstrom recommended producing a script. For Scripture, she prefers topical portions, rather than the entire New Testament on one cassette, since she said it is difficult to find individual verses if too many are presented on one cassette (Malmstrom 1991:115). Then the language team should read and discuss the script with the selected speakers. After everyone is familiar with the content, the bilingual language assistant reads one phrase or sentence to a mother tongue speaker, who then is given a moment to think about what he has heard. When he has memorized the phrase, he speaks it into the microphone and it is recorded. The entire script is done in this way, "phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence." Any unwanted pauses or sounds are edited out, and Malmstrom said the final product has a natural flow (Malmstrom 1991:143). One potential drawback to this technique is that the oral version is crafted at the phrase or sentence level, and naturalness might be affected at the discourse level.

In Grebe and Malmstrom's techniques, there is limited-to-no room for creativity in the oral crafting, since the basic script has already been developed by literates.

Since audience participation has been mentioned as a characteristic of oral performances, some have argued for its inclusion in the translation. Kevin Jarrett outlined three potential models presented by Robert Koops of UBS to tailor a translation for audio media, making room for listener responses.

In Jarrett's work among the Kanuri of Nigeria, he noted that radio broadcast or cassette recordings were accepted means of communicating. He observed that, during particularly interesting programs or recordings, the listeners would "stare intently at" and interact verbally with the machine from which the sound emanated. Vocal interaction occurred regardless of whether it caused the Kanuri to miss portions of the message, so Jarrett's goal was to produce a translation that allowed for "active listener responses in appropriate places" to avoid a "potential break in communication." Jarrett felt that Koops' proposed strategies could effectively provide this break as a means for listener participation and also provide a "polyvocal" recording that oral communicators would appreciate (Jarrett 1989:4).

In the conversational narration model, the Bible text remains in narrative form but is interspersed with listener responses. For example, from the story in Mark 1:21-28 about Jesus casting out an evil spirit, Koops used the following narrator-listener exchange.

> Mark: Let me tell you about the time Jesus drove an evil spirit out of a man at the synagogue in Capernaum.
>
> Neighbor: Good, go ahead! (Jarrett 1989:5).

In the dramatized narration model (Jarrett 1989:8), the story still has a narrator (the gospel writer), but narrated events are interspersed with "multivocal" dialogue, with each character having a different voice. This model differs from the usual written text in that it involves making "implicit speeches" explicit. The following example is from the same passage as above. ("C" stands for "Capernaumite.")

Narrator: One day Jesus and his disciples came to the town of Capernaum, and on the next Sabbath Jesus went to the synagogue. When the people had all assembled, he started to teach them.

Jesus: People of God, listen to what God is saying to you—(fades out).

Narrator: The people who heard him were amazed at the way he taught.

C1: Wow! He sure can teach! (Jarrett 1989:6).

In the radio play model, there is no narrator and all background information is presented as dialogue. Jarrett pointed out that "this model departs most radically from the written Word" and agreed with Koops that such a translation departs from the original form to an uncomfortable degree. Below is an example, again from the Mark passage.

C1: A good Sabbath to you, Peter!

C2: And to you too, John. I see there's a new teacher in the synagogue today (Jarrett 1989:7).

- Jarrett concluded that these three models would help trigger the six benefits that Koops identified to translating Scripture in oral form:
- A variety of voices and the intonation of normal dialogue make the stories more interesting to listen to.
- Dialogue is a natural component of oral communication.
- When different characters use different voices, boundaries of quotations are clear.
- Speeches by groups of speakers can be expressed more naturally on tape.

- Using different voices for different people allows complex inner quotations to be simplified.
- Feelings of the speakers can be expressed more naturally in an aural translation (Jarrett 1989:8-9).

Sundersingh maintained that an audio-based translation, one geared for audio media, must be meaning-based, since moving from one medium to another requires a change of form. He explained that two transfers occur in an aural translation, the transfer from one language to another and from one form (mode) to another (Sundersingh 2001:101). David Burke also explained that, in audio/visual media like video, a functional equivalence, or meaning-based, translation "should present sounds and images that are for the modern receptors the functional equivalents of the original sounds and images that were evoked for the persons who experienced the original storytelling events in the first century A.D." (Burke 1993:104).

According to Sundersingh, The best aural translation will take into account the semantic, discourse and phonological structure of a language (Sundersingh 2001:132-134). A generic word like "animal" for instance, while acceptable in print, is unacceptable in aural form if a background sound depicting that animal is to be used, or in video form for obvious reasons—it is impossible to portray a generic animal on video! (Sundersingh 2001:135).

Sundersingh also pointed out the important role music can play in an audio translation, signaling changes in discourse. He said pauses are "equivalent to the blank spaces on a page" and also important in indicating discourse-level changes (Sundersingh

2001:135). With audio media one must use music, sound effects and words "to the fullest extent in order to capture the imagination of the listener as we attempt to take him or her on a journey into the pages of Scripture." This means considering culturally appropriate formats and approaches (Sundersingh 2001:145).

The translator must be aware of the audiences' attitudes toward audio and visual media. He must be equally sensitive to his own biases and preferences and make every effort to eliminate, or at least minimize, them (Sundersingh 2001:146).

For audio-based translation Sundersingh promoted a "hypertext" approach to aural translation. He described it this way:

> When we take a book to read, we generally start at the beginning and continue reading until the end and then we know we have read the book. That way of using a book is called a "textual approach." However, there is another way of reading that we generally apply to reading magazines. We browse through the magazine or look at the table of contents and directly leap forward to the part we want to read or browse, then we jump over to the next interesting feature, and so on. That kind of a reading is a "hypertextual approach" (Sundersingh 2001:55).

Sundersingh noted that the Internet is an example where hypertext reading occurs. The reader decides where to enter and where to exit, viewing only the portions that interest him at the time. He argued that use of the Bible, even in print, usually takes place hypertextually, since people rarely read the Bible from beginning to end like other books, and most sermons also take this approach (Sundersingh 2001:55). Any audio translation will be limited to its ability to be used hypertextually, Sundersingh argued, so there is no reason it should not be designed for such use. He claimed that "on the basis of evidence from Scriptures, history, ecclesiastical use, and communication theory" a hypertextual approach is more appropriate than a linear textual approach for audio media

(Sundersingh 2001:56). Audio media is more effective when coupled with narrative discourse, and the narrative genre is an ideal mode for oral communication, so the Bible in audio media should consist of narrative passages in hypertext form (Sundersingh 2001:54-56). Brown would likely agree with this method, since it closely resembles his suggestion of embedding non-narrative genres into narratives (Brown 2004:125) and selecting Scripture portions that "cover the full breadth of the Biblical message" but with consideration to the audience's worldview (Brown 1995:23).

While the debate continues on how to incorporate audio media into a translation program, Burke argued that, at that time (1993), no video translations of the Bible had been made. In other words, no "Bible audiovisuals" had been created "from an examination of the original language Bible texts not only in terms of word meaning but also their sound and image characteristics" (Burke 1993:104). He said that a video, or multimedia, translation should be sensitive to six considerations:

- Tensions existing when translating from original written texts to an audiovisual version
- Paradigmatic context of each specific translation project
- Faithfulness to original texts, which will focus on intended response
- Literary genres of the Bible, which will be conveyed in contemporary genres "providing a comparable range of experience"
- Elements of sound and images, which will be of equal importance
- Text selection, which will follow the lines of recognizable discourse units and be presented clearly (Burke 1993:106-107).

Burke said the development of a video translation would require a study of the influence of factors such as rhythm, intonation, attitude, volume, repetition, emotion, music and images with their accompanying symbolism (Burke 1993:110). No one translation would be adequate for every audience, he contended, nor did he believe the video translation should replace print translation, which he said would continue as part of the "long continuum in the ongoing tradition of communication of the Bible to all people" (Burke 1993:106).

The American Bible Society developed a pilot project for young people, whom Burke described as "increasingly less likely to read." It was not a historical recreation, but the "cinematic functional equivalent of the original storytelling event." The goal is for the translation to address the modern audience through words, music and images, and to invite an emotional response, just as the original storytelling event did with its audience (Burke 1993:108). Along with the video translation, the ABS designed a computer program with supplementary study materials. The program involves the use of film, still images, text, music, speech, graphics and games in an interactive format.

2.8 Genre—One More Factor Affecting Oral Translation

In *My Tongue is the Pen,* Malmstrom related the following story:

> The old village chief sat with tears streaming down his cheeks as he listened to the words of the Scriptures coming from the small cassette player. They were not being spoken. Instead, they floated into the air in a beautiful and distinctive epic song. Listening for several hours caused the old man to realize the immensity of his sin. He had been a rebel and had killed political enemies. As the impact of the message pierced his heart, he cried out in anguish, "Will God ever be able to forgive me?" God's word was speaking directly to him (Malmstrom 1991:32).

SIL translators had recorded eight hours of Scripture, including the creation story, the life of Christ and portions from the Revelation, using the epic narrative form of the *ulegingen*. It was recorded during a time of great change for this (unnamed) language group, who considered Christianity another foreign threat to their identity. When they heard the Word of God in the familiar form of the *ulegingen,* many people accepted the message (Malmstrom 1991:32-33).

Malmstrom's account illustrates effective use of narrative, which Brown and others have mentioned work well for oral communicators. Brown wrote, "Messages are more likely to be enjoyed and remembered if they are presented in narrative forms, such as stories, rather than in non-narrative forms, such as lectures" (Brown 2004:123). Sundersingh wrote that narrative works better than other genres for audio media, a principle upon which he based his argument for a hypertextual approach to translation (Sundersingh 2001:56). Brown wrote that translation for oral communicators should begin with Old Testament narrative portions starting with Genesis, then moving throughout the Bible including "priority narrative portions" in chronological order (Brown 1995:21).

Few would disagree that narrative is an effective way to reach oral communicators with God's Word. In fact, people have been telling the "sweeping story" of the Bible since New Testament times, beginning with Jesus Christ himself on the road to Emmaus (Steffen and Terry 2007:317). However, since a variety of genres are used in the Bible, and a variety of genres exist in oral communication systems, some authors

believe it is important to allow those genres, including narrative, to play an appropriate role in an oral translation.

Writing about translation among the largely oral Gbaya of Cameroon, Philip Noss commented:

> If the translator uses the form of the oral corpus as his model and if the goal of the translation is the communication of the message in such a way that "the response of the receptor is essentially that of the original receptors" (Nida and Taber 1969: 202), the significance of an oral perspective must be recognized. Not only is the social and cultural context of the receptor people relevant, but the perspective implicit in their oral corpus itself is relevant as well (Noss 1981:301).

According to Noss, despite sixty years of missionary effort to produce written materials and teach literacy among the Gbaya, the primary method of communication remained oral. Around 1971 a team began to prepare a new translation of the New Testament and to translate the Old Testament, and they quickly realized the extent of Gbaya orality. Daily communication was almost always oral, and even messages sent long distance were usually transmitted by word of mouth rather than in written form. Noss wrote, "This was also the form that was most natural for them and that they instinctively adopted once they broke out of the mold of the French classroom in which they had received their education." As the team worked to include oral style in the new translation, they discovered that in addition to an oral style there exists an oral perspective that must be included. In other words, the Gbaya worldview is reflected in its frame of expression. Within their orature is a prescription for how social relationships should occur and a precedent for judging social action (Noss 1981:302).

About a third of all Gbaya tales are about a character named Wanto. They reflect the world of the Gbaya (their villages, gardens, valleys and rivers), and Wanto's activities

their activities (hunting, fishing, farming, getting married, fighting, dancing, etc.). Tales about Wanto are comic yet deal with serious issues. His character represents man in his most natural, happy-go-lucky and self-indulging ways, while another character, Laisso, contrasts as the responsible man who follows the demands of society. Wanto is the standard by which the Gbaya measure their own actions and those of others; someone whose behavior doesn't meet societal norms is said to "[do] things like Wanto." Because there exists no sacred text in Gbaya, the tales of Wanto contain "the single most important and constant influence in Gbaya transmitted thought" (Noss 1981:306-307).

When a particular genre like the Wanto stories is so influential in reflecting and maintaining societal norms and tied closely to a group's worldview, genre must be carefully considered when introducing a text as important as God's Word into a language for the first time. Noss said that using familiar genres helps the receptor understand the Bible better.

> Being aware then of the literary context within which his message will be received, the translator must make every effort to translate with maximum clarity, using to the fullest possible extent the literary devices and the grammatical structures of the receptor language. In this way he may at least lighten the burden of the receptor who is not only receiving new information, but who must at the same time modify his oral perception to accommodate the new information that is being presented to him through a new use of old form (Noss 1981:310).

Noss stressed that a genre-based translation need not resemble the original in every detail, but it should measure up to the high standards of the receptor audience in their oral communication. Most crucially, he said, it must be pleasant to listen to and make sense. Gbaya children undergo "apprenticeships" in learning to tell tales, and Noss said the value of a tale does not lie within its text but in its telling (Noss 1981:311).

Three features of the Gbaya oral narrative are a usually chronological sequence of events (Noss 1981:311), an emphasis on action and the consequent predominance of verbs (to the detriment of description) (Noss 1981:313), and the ideophone, which Noss called the "par excellence" of Gbaya imagery—the clearest indicator of skill in oral narration (Noss 1981:314). These features would necessarily be included in a genre-based Gbaya translation, but caution must be employed because each has implications. Because of the features' significance, Noss said, action stories and parables are easier to translate into Gbaya than historical accounts with little action and technical descriptions such as those of the ark and the tabernacle (Noss 1981:315-316). Of course, each language will likely vary on how closely emic genres resemble Biblical genres. However, Noss's example effectively underscores the important role of genre in oral translation.

Wendland agreed that a Bible translation intended for oral use "ought to be based on, or at least guided by, an indigenous oral genre." He suggested collecting recordings of oral performances of available genres in the receptor language, such as histories, imaginary narratives, poetry, argumentative discourse, diatribe, and formal initiatory instruction, and studying them for natural rhythmic patterns. The results then could be used to compose rhythmic speech units (RSUs) that will best represent the Biblical genre being translated. As Wendland explained, the RSUs of the translated text should correspond as closely as possible to the RSUs of the indigenous genre that is most similar to the Biblical text" (Wendland 1993:42). He said a Chewa example, the *ndakatulo,* would be a good model for Biblical poetry, and it contains several features, like figurative

speech and ideophones, that make it excellent for oral presentation. Wendland cautioned that those features would need to be modified to ensure an appropriate Biblical style that doesn't sound too "radical or secularized." He added:

> A lot of research and testing will obviously be necessary in order to find appropriate models, analyze them, and apply the right features to the right genres in the Biblical text. But in a sociocultural setting where a high premium is placed upon the spoken word, there is really no option. Unfortunately, this is an aspect of Bible translation and use that usually gets left out (Wendland 1993:43).

Vansina said that genres are recognized in every culture and even named, so it should be possible to identify those genres that would most closely match the Biblical genres and subgenres, since the fact of naming genres demonstrates the understanding of the concept (Vansina 1985:79-80). However, native speakers are best suited to identify those genres, since they are the ones who understand their own classification system best. To illustrate this point, Vansina described three genres found in the language of the Kuba of Zaire: *shoosh*, similar to slogans; *ncyeem,* which means "song"; and *mikwoon*, translated something like "proverbs." According to Vansina, these genres are so similar that they would be difficult for an outsider to identify, but insiders know well which discourses belong to each of them. Thus, he said, genres are "culture-bound" concepts (Vansina 1985:81).

For the Bible translator, one of the most important aspects of a particular genre is whether its discourse is characterized as "true." Rodolfo Barlaan reported that the Isneg language of the Philippines calls for different speech strategies for factual and fictional narrative discourse genres (Barlaan 1977:110). For example, factual discourse contains the locative marker *kitu,* denoting a specific place familiar to the narrator and hearer,

whereas fiction employs a variety of other locative markers. When the narrator sets the stage for a story, the audience knows whether to expect a true story or fiction (Barlaan 1977:111). The focus markers *tu* and *datu* are unique to factual discourse, while the use of the demonstrative particle *yán* in an existential clause signifies fiction (Barlaan 1977:113). Additionally, in factual discourse episodes are usually linear, but fictional episodes tend to be patterned cyclically (Barlaan 1977:114).

Vansina warned that “the notion of ‘truth’ itself is culture bound and cannot be assumed to correspond to the ‘historical truth’ familiar to an academic scholar” (Vansina 1985:83). This is just one of the many reasons why genre must be carefully understood from an emic perspective and appropriately chosen to represent Biblical truth.

Oral cultures offer a rich selection of genres. When Carol and Norris McKinney began to record the oral traditions of the Bajju of Nigeria, they found a reflection of the values, worldview, attitudes and wisdom from previous generations presented in a wide variety of genres (McKinney 1996:1). Among the genres they found dilemma tales, dirges, epics, fables, folk tales, founding charters (including creation and migration narratives), legends or etiological tales, oracles, trickster narratives, praise songs, and prayers (McKinney 1996:2). Following are some additional specific genres found in different languages.

According to Vansina, a creation story of some kind is common to all peoples (Vansina 1985:21). McKinney refers to founding charters, which have to do with creation or migration, i.e. how the people came to reside in their current location. A Bajju example is the Baranzan narrative, Baranzan being the “founding father of the

Bajju" whose sons founded various villages (McKinney 1996:2-3). The Guaraní have the story of "Our First Absolute Father" who created himself and everything else (Lahaye 2003:402). The Mande groups of West Africa believe they originated from two seeds of the opposite sex in the "egg of God (*Mangala)*" (Dieterlen 1957:126). The Pawnees of the Midwestern United States tell of their creation by *Atíus Tiráwa*, which translates as "Father Spirit" (Grinnell 1893:121-123). The Acoma of the western United States have a creation myth that starts out, "In the beginning two female human beings were born." Their father, *Utc'tsiti,* created the world, sun, sky and other things, and he gave them two baskets of seeds and images of animals, from which they were to create everything else (Forde 1930:371-374).

Genealogies are another form of historical account (Vansina 1985:24). These might take the form of praise songs, perhaps performed at a funeral. Klem described the Yoruba *oríkì* as a praise song containing "praise names" of the person memorialized and his ancestors. The praise names have meanings that reflect the person's personal characteristics and accomplishments, and "a string of names in the praise song will give a brief and glorified biographical sketch of a person's life." One interesting name, He-Who-Has-Not-Got-Elephantiasis, could be used to ascribe agility. The *oríkì* may be performed publicly or privately, and for a variety of reasons, such as pleasing the ancestors, honoring the clan's founders, or giving oneself courage for a upcoming activity (Klem 1982:115-116). These and the *oríkì orílè* poems of the tribe "contain the history and glory of the community" (Klem 1982:120).

The *oríkì* is poetic, but like other Yoruba poetry does not rhyme, although rhythm is very important. Klem compared Yoruba poetry to that of Hebrew, having relatively short lines and parallel thoughts. He said the poetic genre would work well for creating memorizable Yoruba Christian materials, and it was the basis for his translation of the book of Hebrews (Klem 1982:116-117).

With regard to the Psalms, Brian Schrag argued, "…the primary components which must be communicated when these texts are being translated into a receptor language are not propositional truths, but emotional and social dynamics" (Schrag 1992:44). Because music and language perform similarly in culture, Schrag said the most authentic way to translate a psalm was to compose a new song, without worrying about losing some of the formal features of the original (Schrag 1992:60).

David Moomo, a native Ebira speaker, analyzed and compared both form and function of Ebira poetry to Hebrew poetry. He concluded that Hebrew poetry and songs, including the Psalms, should be translated as poetry and songs in the receptor language, and that Ebira poetry was similar enough to Hebrew to allow this (Moomo 1993:21-22, 24). He wrote, "An important point to remember is that printing lines to give the appearance of poetry does not make poetry. It should be aurally poetic: printed lines are not heard" (Moomo 1993:23). He recommended that translators collect songs and poems in the receptor language, study them to determine their structure and use, and then find ways to translate Biblical poems and songs into receptor language genres (Moomo 1993:24).

All Guaraní sacred texts, called songs, have a form that cannot be changed. This is not true of "secular" texts in that language (Lahaye 2003:402). Various prayers exist in Guaraní, each also having a fixed form. One is said in order to render effective a trap that has been set; another is used to repel evils such as diseases (Lahaye 2003:404). The Guaraní have a prayer/song/dance combination called *mborahéi puku,* characterized by its fixed form and content. It is usually performed at dawn during a major celebration. Other sounds, together referred to as *heroviha,* are incorporated into the performance. To enhance his performance, the performer can choose from a range of features such as intonation, rhythmic changes with onomatopoeia, tremolos, interjections, and distortions of the voice (Lahaye 2003:403). Perhaps these genres could be considered in translating some of the Psalms into Guaraní.

Another Guaraní genre, the *ára kuaávy*, contains the accumulation of "true wisdom" in the language. These texts have to do with everything from social, family and political matters to ethical and moral values, and even economics (Lahaye 2003:404). Their form are not necessarily pithy like the Biblical Proverbs, but the *ára kuaávy* still may be appropriate for translating wisdom passages in the Bible. According to Wolfgang Mieder, "there are literally thousands of proverbs in the multitude of cultures and languages of the world" (Mieder 2004:xii), and proverbs exist covering "every imaginable context" (Mieder 2004:1).

Voth discussed a genre found in South American Spanish called the *payada,* an apparently rhyming poetry that is improvised in public and covering a variety of themes. A subgenre of this is the *contrapunto*, during the composition of which two *payadores*

will oppose each other. The first will make his point by reciting or singing at least four lines of poetry, and the second *payador* will make the counterpoint (hence the name) using the same number of lines. The wide range of themes of the *payadas* may cover anything from the family to horses, from the fight for independence to love and friendship, from the *gaucho* to the Indian, but often they include a "critique of social injustice" and a "proposal for a better world." Voth called their resemblance to Hebrew prophetic texts "obvious," implying they may be an appropriate genre for translating those texts (Voth 2005:125).

Noting the similarities between the *payadas* and American rap music, Voth and Diego de Lorenzi composed a rap version of Isaiah 51 called "You're in for Trouble!" (Voth 2005:127-128). The lyrics, along with a parallel NLT version of the passage, can be found in appendix B.

CHAPTER 3 – GUIDELINES FOR PRODUCING AN ORAL TRANSLATION

3.1 Goals for Any Translation

Before examining the factors involved in producing an oral translation, it is important to identify the characteristics of a quality translation in any format. The factors for producing an oral translation will be weighed against these goals.

3.1.1 Faithful to Original Text

Fidelity exists when both the meaning and dynamics[9] of the original message are conveyed in the translation. According to John Beekman and John Callow, fidelity is only concerned with form insofar as the original form was "natural and meaningful," lending the original message a "dynamic quality" which must carry over into the translation. So the meaning, or the information the original author meant to convey, and the dynamics, or the natural use of the linguistic form of the language, must be the same for the receptor audience as it was for the original audience (Beekman and Callow 1974:33-34).

The exegesis of the Bible is necessary for fidelity, as it is the process of determining what the original authors meant. The fidelity requirement applies

[9] I understand that the term "dynamic equivalence" is controversial, but when producing a translation for use via non-print media translators must confront the issue of dynamics and the emotional response evoked by those media types. Several writers referenced in this study have used the term "dynamics," and I have copied their use.

specifically to historical and didactic references, and careful exegesis ensures that there is no incomplete, extraneous or inaccurate information (Beekman and Callow 1974:37).

Barnwell did not use the word "faithful," but she insisted that a translation should be *accurate*, communicating the exact meaning of the original message, without regard for the original form (Barnwell 2002:24). In pursuing faithfulness one should try to understand what the original receptors heard and what images were evoked as they listened to the telling of the stories or reading aloud of the letters (Burke 1993:108).

Over the years many people have endorsed the need to translate as closely as possible the form of the original (i.e. word for word). English writer and translator Richard Rolle believed in "following the letter" to the extent possible (Robinson 2002:50). More recently, Leland Ryken wrote, "Translation of ideas or thoughts *rather than words* is a logical fallacy and linguistic fantasy" (Ryken 2002:287-288, italics in original). Euan Fry of the United Bible Societies argued, however, that restructuring is often necessary in order to remain faithful to the original message. He said a translator must know the particular form of the language that will evoke in his receptors the same understanding and feelings as the original message. (Fry 1999:14) "Extensive restructuring, such as is involved in dramatization for instance, does not automatically result in a Scripture presentation being unfaithful to the biblical author and his text," said Fry (Fry 1999:17).

More information, such as prosodic features, must be made explicit in an oral translation than in a print version. A literal translation, with its accompanying lower communicability, also presents a lower risk of misrepresenting the original author's

intent. On the other hand, a translation produced in the oral style and genres of the receptor language have higher communicability but also a higher risk of misrepresentation. So while the potential benefits of an oral translation are increased—it has a greater impact and is more widely available to oral communicators—the costs of creating such a translation also increase; translators must be highly skilled, and more careful exegesis is required in order to ensure a faithful and accurate message. Despite the risks, Fry said, "I believe that it is possible to produce presentations of Scripture in the various non-print media which meet a standard of faithfulness that we in the Bible Societies can accept and defend" (Fry 1999:24).

3.1.2 Clear, Understandable

Barnwell suggested that a translation should be clear enough to be understood by its receptor audience (Barnwell 2002:24). Rigorous testing of a translation is necessary to ensure the audience comprehends its message. Hill argued that people generally agree the Bible is most easily understood when it is presented in the mother tongue (Hill 1995:5).

3.1.3 Natural (Idiomatic)

Barnwell said a translation "should not sound like a translation at all." Instead, it should reflect the natural speech of people who speak the receptor language (Barnwell 2002:24). Beekman and Callow identify naturalness with fidelity, believing that a natural sound lends to the faithfulness of a text (Beekman and Callow1974:33).

3.1.4 Accessible

While translators will likely agree that the Word of God must be accessible to the receptor audience, accessibility is a more complicated characteristic of a translation than the preceding ones. One problem deals with the meaning of accessibility. Traditionally it might have been defined as a situation where people are literate and have a print Bible available for personal reading. There is an obvious problem with that definition, since so many people cannot or do not read. And in the case of collectivist societies, where decisions and activities are shared, would private reading of or even listening to the Bible violate societal norms?[10] These are issues to consider in defining personal access to Scriptures.

Although a valid strategy, a worrisome aspect to designing a translation for public reading is the creation of a situation where only certain people—in this case the literate—can access the Scriptures without someone's help. Kilham's statement that an elite group of literates in an oral society may have a "very important role of *liaison*" between oral communicators and the permanent reference base (Kilham 1987:46) troubles me somewhat, as it reminds me of the days when only priests had access to the Bible and served as *liaisons* between God's Word and the laity. Stine noted that in Africa many people have the Bible read aloud to them in church (Stine 1980:419), and that does in some measure provide access to the Scriptures. But for a literate person, being read aloud to would not qualify as personal access; literates typically carry their Bibles to

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[10] For a brief discussion on the differences between individualism and collectivism, see chapter 15 of Duane Elmer's *Cross-Cultural Connections* (2002).

church so they can read along with the pastor, or at least they jot down the passages he reads aloud so that they can study them later.

It is unfair for literates to have more lenient accessibility standards for oral communicators than they have for themselves. I recognize the Biblical precedent for public reading (1 Timothy 4:13), and I have already acknowledged the possibility that in some societies public reading may qualify as personal access as much as owning one's own copy and reading in private does in a literate society. My point is simply to insist on having comparable standards with regard to accessibility, rather than accepting a lower standard for oral communicators as an excuse to avoid the difficult work of an oral translation. In other words, it is not responsible to produce a print translation just because that's the easiest way to translate, assuming that the literates can read to the nonliterates, and call that access. It is the translator's responsibility to identify those culture-specific views of access to knowledge and information and to incorporate those views into his translation strategy.

Because literacy is so tightly associated with access, it would probably be difficult to find a minority translation project that does not include a literacy component. Dye wrote, "All will agree… that the principal purpose in linguistics, translation and literacy is that minority group members will read the Scriptures and derive spiritual benefit from them" (Dye 1985:22). The idea is that people should be able to read the Bible *for themselves*. Protestants have a history of teaching people to read "in order that they may find for themselves in the Bible, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the Word God has given to them." This assumption ties spiritual maturity to literacy skills (Klem 1995:59).

Wilson wrote that "when the Protestant Reformation unfettered the Bible from the bondage of the Middle Ages, and gave it back to the people as their rightful heritage, it was assumed that everyone should have both the right and the obligation to read the Bible for themselves. Thus we tend to assume that oral skills and media are incapable of and inappropriate for the transmission of Scripture" (Wilson 1991:3).

In order to be accessible to the billions of oral communicators in the world, the Bible must be presented in aural form, something they can listen to whenever they choose in culturally appropriate ways, and it must be presented in the oral style with which they are familiar.

Audio media, however, bring with them another factor influencing an oral audience's access to Scriptures, viz. distribution. Søgaard stressed that audio recordings cannot be distributed in the same way as books and called for "creative distribution systems," along with consideration of the financial situation involved in the production of audio-Scriptures. He said many who need audio-Scriptures are poor. "If we just focus on those who can pay," he wrote, "we will continue to cater to the literate peoples of the world." He recommended church-based loan systems (Søgaard 1995:75). Translation programs must include strategies for overcoming all these potential barriers to access.

3.1.5 Reproducible

> Can [the church] be satisfied with our members having the Word in a book, or do we want to have it memorized in their minds and hearts?
>
> Viggo Søgaard, "The Emergence of Audio-Scriptures in Church and Mission"

For literates, a print translation allows the reader to study, learn and know the message by heart. Walter Ong wrote, "You know what you can recall" (Ong 1982:33). For oral communicators, the ability to memorize their texts is a valuable skill (Ong 1982:57). But a message must be memorable in order to be memorized; that is why orature usually employs rhythm, formulas and other memory aids not necessary in print communication (Ong 1982:33-35). For literates and oral communicators alike, the Bible should be presented in a way that is memorable and reproducible. "When the gospel is communicated to an oral learner in a way that shows dependence on a written or recorded presentation, it inhibits this reproducibility" (International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee 2005:43).

Karl Grebe told a story about his experiences among the Nso of Cameroon. At a Baptist church where literacy classes had once been held, a pastor read with some difficulty the English version of 1 Corinthians 13, after which he translated it into Nso. Grebe said, "By the translation, I could tell that he had understood very little of the English, and I prepared myself for a poor sermon. To my surprise, I found that he illustrated his message on love almost exclusively by quoting different portions of Mark, almost verbatim as we had recorded them." Although the pastor was a poor reader, he had memorized audio recordings of Bible passages and understood them (Grebe 1981:16). The recorded version of Scripture was reproducible.

Margaret Hill discussed the value of memorization of Scripture, and the Scripture Use course she designed included a lesson on memorization techniques (Hill 1995:29-32). Oral communicators, however, are experts at memorization, if not the verbatim

memorization to which literates are accustomed. Ong said, "You know what you can recall," (Ong 1982:33). Nonliterates know *only* what they can recall. Vansina remarked, "How it is possible for a mind to remember and out of nothing to spin complex ideas, messages, and instructions for living, which manifest continuity over time is one of the greatest wonders one can study…" (Vansina 1985:xi).

Obviously memorization is important, even essential, with an oral translation. However, it would be wise to let mother tongue speakers memorize the Scriptures using their own proven techniques. This is even more apparent since Hill's guide for memorization relied on literate-styled thinking and some level of achieved literacy on the part of the participants. Klem pointed out that a Yoruba pastor once complained to him about the westerners' insistence on verbatim memorization of Scripture, calling them dull. He said that more Africans would memorize Bible passages if they were free to do so according to their own custom, which Klem described as "controlled variation for the sake of artistic expressions and relevance to particular situations" (Klem 1982:121). However, some people might be uncomfortable with this approach to memorizing Scripture, feeling that it must be memorized in a fixed form.

Since her focus is on how translated Scripture is used, Hill did not address methods for styling a translation so that it is memorizable. However, because oral language is characterized by the utilization of mnemonic devices, a translation styled particularly for oral communicators would be easier to memorize. Section 3.2 of this study will address the factors contributing to a good oral translation.

3.1.6 Complete

All Scripture is inspired by God (II Timothy 3:16). Although many projects involve the translation of Scripture portions or just the New Testament, ideally all people would have access to the entire Bible.

While many missionaries focus on getting the message of Jesus Christ to people before other parts of the Bible, Don Pederson of New Tribes Mission wrote, “All the concepts crucial to a proper understanding of the Gospel are introduced and developed in the Old Testament.” This is especially important to oral communicators who learn well through narrative because the OT contains stories that reveal the nature of God (Pederson 1995:95).

Seeing that the OT provides a necessary background to the New, Porter wrote that SIL is increasingly striving to translate more, if not all, of the OT (Porter 1995:106). Søgaard goes even farther in saying that the NT cannot be fully understood without understanding the Old (Søgaard 1995:75). Trevor McIlwain of New Tribes Mission wrote, “The Old Testament provides the foundational revelation of God as man’s sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, holy, loving, righteous, merciful, and immutable Creator, Lawgiver, Judge, and Saviour” (McIlwain 1991:40). It is possible that neglecting to translate the OT for a people group means withholding from them a full understanding of the Gospel.

The OT is not the only part of the Bible missing from oral translations. Generally, the focus seems to be only on making sure oral communicators have narrative portions, i.e. stories. Bible portions, whether collections of stories and/or individual

books, have their place in evangelism and introducing people to God's Word in culturally acceptable ways, ways that confront their worldview and change their thinking. However, Fry warned that there is a danger in choosing to present portions. He said that for people who have no concept of the Bible as one book consisting of various other "books," Scripture portions pose special problems. For one, when a passage is taken out of context its meaning can change, or it can simply lose its meaning. Fry said people who are being introduced to the Bible via a particular portion can assume one of four things:

- This is the main message of the Bible.
- This genre represents the entire Bible.
- This is all the Bible has to say about this topic.
- This is the only perspective in the Bible on this topic (Fry 1999:9).

These assumptions may be true for both literates and nonliterates. Under these circumstances, it is especially important that the entire Bible be available to the receptor audience in a meaningful and accessible way so that everyone can have the access to God's Word in its entirety. Additionally, Wendland argued that the entire Scripture should be translated specifically for oral delivery (Wendland 1993:43).

While understanding it to be a challenging task, I believe it is possible to translate contents of the entire Old and New Testaments according to the factors presented in this study. Translators should not decide that oral communicators can make do with selected passages in narrative form until they become literate enough to read the rest of the Bible. I am not arguing against the translation of Bible stories; I believe they can be effective in

both evangelism and teaching. However, as most will agree, they do not substitute for a complete Bible translation. I am arguing that a complete Bible translation and orality are compatible—and necessary.

3.2 Factors Involved in Achieving These Goals for an Oral Translation

With these goals in mind I now turn to the factors involved in producing an oral translation, a Bible that includes both the Old and New Testaments, composed in oral style and recorded, and intended for oral/aural use by oral communicators.

Oral cultures are noted for a high regard for the spoken word. Many oral communicators believe that the spoken word has power to bring into existence the thing that has been said (Klem 1982:113-114). For example, the Hamer of Ethiopia believe there should be no argument on the public stage because "speaking by itself influences the social and the natural cosmos around the speaker." If people all speak the same things, those things will become "like the word wanted them," whereas the power of conflicting words would not be "strong enough to influence the cosmos." Public meetings, then, are repeated with the intent that the speeches given are elevated to a level of social (group harmony) and natural (causing rain to fall) causation (Strecker 1976:596).

Words are highly valued for their "positive potential" and equally feared for their negative (Wendland 1993:30). Kelber attributes the same characteristic to the apostle Paul, stating that his use of *logos* with a genitive (e.g., 'word of life') attributes to "the word" the quality of the genitive object. For example, he said that the phrase "word of life" refers to the power of life that the word transmits (Kelber 1983:145). "Paul

connects the word as power with oral word because the real nature of words, their power, is disclosed when they are spoken, pronounced" (Funk 1966, quoted in Kelber 1983:145).

The great value placed on the spoken word in oral cultures adds to the propriety of the notion of creating an oral translation—a translation entirely designed in an oral style and intended for oral use.

Kilham listed three possible approaches to translating the Bible for oral audiences:

- Produce a written translation modeled on oral language patterns but intended for reading.
- Produce a translation modeled on oral language patterns intended only for audio or audio-visual presentation.
- Produce a translation modeled on the written style as developed by mother tongue speakers (Kilham 1987:45).

Kilham discounted the first approach saying it will not provide a readable text. She preferred the third approach, believing it effective as long as the translators are "mindful of the audience" and develop a written style that "conveys the meaning in an understandable and beautiful way." She acknowledged that lack of literacy skills could be a deterrent to the success of this approach, but added that it did not preclude concurrent oral communication of the Scripture (Kilham 1987:45-46).

It is my opinion that the second approach is the best way to *first* reach oral communicators with the Scriptures, reaching them in the manner which they understand best. This approach, too, would not preclude subsequent print communication of the

Scriptures. Kilham recognized that a translator might argue for such an approach on the basis of a cultural resistance to literacy, but she gave two arguments against such an approach: "He will be denying Scripture in written form to those who may one day become motivated to read it for themselves, and he will miss out on providing a permanent reference base (for people to check, correct and test their oral communication)" (Kilham 1987:45).

These arguments reflect a literacy bias, the assumption by literates that literacy is superior to nonliteracy, and that true access to the Scriptures necessarily occurs through a written translation. It could be argued that a written translation denies oral communicators the opportunity to *hear* the Scriptures for themselves in a way that is amenable to their cognitive processes. It could also be argued that other media forms besides print, like audio and video recordings, can provide a "permanent reference base" for oral Scriptures. Although it may be argued that an oral base is not searchable, Brown wrote, "We should not assume that oral communicators will want to use the Scriptures as print-oriented people do." He argued that oral communicators do not look things up but "retrieve them from memory" (Brown 1995:19).

Assuming that differences, whether universal or language-specific, indeed exist between oral and written communication, and that the guidelines for a print and an oral translation necessarily differ, I have identified the following four factors to guide the production of a translation especially designed and effective for oral communicators.

3.2.1 Translation Should be Meaning-Based.

An oral translation requires more freedom with regard to form than is permitted with a literal translation. Therefore, a translation for oral communicators must be meaning-based.

3.2.1.1 Brief Contrast of Literal vs. Meaning-Based

Two main approaches to translation are literal and meaning-based. Proponents of the former believe the meaning is best communicated through a form that closely matches that of the original. Proponents of the latter believe a message is best expressed through natural use of the receptor language, even if its form does not match that of the original. These approaches can be placed on a scale from "highly literal" to "unduly free" (Beekman and Callow 1974:20-21).

Verbatim translation can present problems in any language, since an expression in one language might mean something completely different, or have no meaning at all, in another language. A good illustration is the translation of Mark 10:38 into a West African language. Jesus asked His disciples, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?" This translated literally into the receptor language as a drunk person asking his friends if they can drink as much or as strong a drink as he can. In other words, in this African translation, Jesus was challenging his friends to a drinking contest! (Beekman and Callow 1974:22-23).

3.2.1.2 Why Meaning-Based Works Best for an Oral Translation

While the explanation above may seem to suggest that every translation should be meaning-based, at least for oral translations this is certainly true. As Fry explained,

restructuring the form of a text is necessary when translating not just from one language to another, but from one medium to another. He wrote, “As we move away from the print medium, we find that we have to extend the application of our principles of functional equivalence to cover restructuring a message into a form of ‘text’ which is appropriate for presentation in the particular medium chosen” (Fry 1999:16). That an oral translation must be tailored for audio/visual media will be discussed later, but the point here is that, before beginning the process of oral translation, one must understand that restructuring of the form of the original message will be necessary. An oral translation cannot be a literal translation.

Another factor that encourages a meaning-based translation is genre. A translation influenced by sensitivity to genre will require restructuring in the receptor language (Burke 1993:109). Such a drastic restructuring as Brown’s encouragement to embed expository discourse into the stories according to a chronological timeline would obviously necessitate a meaning-based approach.

Burke said that a video translation should be meaning-based, presenting sounds and images that convey the same dynamics that the original storytelling events conveyed to the original audience (Burke 1993:108). A meaning-based rendering enhances the potential for both “proper understanding” and “appropriate response” to the message of the source (Burke 1993:105). Of course, the difficulty lies in knowing and recovering the original dynamics, but to the extent possible, this is an admirable goal.

3.2.2 Orality-Based: Use Oral Style.

If it is right to communicate the gospel in the vernacular, and if it is right to use other culturally appropriate means to ensure that the gospel is understood and applied

within a society, then it is important to appreciate oral skills and to use the attributes and capabilities of people in an oral culture.

John Wilson, "What It Takes to Reach People in Oral Cultures"

In the Review of the Literature (chapter 2), considerable space was given to the discussion of whether there are universal differences between written and spoken style. Ong (1982) characterized oral communication as additive, aggregative, redundant, concrete and related to the real life. Whether or not they believe these differences are universal, many authors have suggested that within any given language, written style does not mimic oral style (Adams 1972, Kilham 1987, Mathew 2005). The research is sufficient to prompt translators to examine written and spoken style within their own receptor language and note any differences they discover. If an oral translation is deemed appropriate for a particular language, then it should be produced according to emic oral style.

"Just as we have had to compensate when reducing an oral text to writing, the reverse is required" in making written materials oral, according to Malmstrom. She said that failure to do so may result in a foreign and unnatural sound and a confusing message. "Only in the case where the aural material is programmed for reading, and such is stated, should the spoken script be identical to the written style" (Malmstrom 1989:32).

Sundersingh contended that "print and writing are for the eyes to see and audio and speech are for ears to hear and these two modes of reception are not the same." He stressed that audio-based translations should account for meaning expressed through "intonation, rhythm, punctuation based on phonetical breaks and employ an appropriate

high-low variety of language." They also call for a "deliberate dilution of density by repetition," appropriate colloquialism and more function words (Sundersingh 2001:101).

Since the characteristics of oral style are likely to vary from language to language, careful attention must be paid to understanding the differences between written and oral style in each particular language, at least those where written texts exist. By comparing original oral texts to versions of the same texts edited for written style, Sunil Mathew, who developed a model of translation for public reading, identified the following differences in Dungra Bhil:

- The oral versions contained more repetition.
- Written texts were more explicit, with more frequent use of nouns, pronouns and locative nouns. Subjects were often deleted from oral texts and added to written versions.
- Written texts were more carefully sequenced and organized, employing a formal announcement of the discourse topic.
- Prominence markers that are common in spoken language were not permitted in the written versions. Such markers include front- and back-shifting of subjects and objects, and the use of the particle *tome.*
- The additive conjunction *ono* is used more frequently in oral texts, and head-tail linkage, common in spoken language, was considered unacceptable for written versions.

- Word order was stricter for written versions, which did not allow fronting of subjects, because readers might confuse participants. Fronting of subjects was permitted in speech, however.
- Direct quotations were more common in oral texts, while indirect quotations were used in written versions.
- Written texts utilized more loan words and expressions than oral versions (Mathew 2005:34-36).

John Wilson wrote that tail-head linkage and topic and domain markers can be edited out of written versions, since they are redundant. Readers can look back and check missed or misunderstood details, so repetition is not as necessary in written texts (Wilson 1991:234). Mathew took this approach in translating 1 Timothy into Dungra Bhil, while arguing that a compromise is needed in order to produce a translation that serves both readers and listeners. He wrote that a heavy reliance on oral features will make the translation difficult and unpleasant to read, but, on the other hand, the absence of oral features may make a translation difficult to listen to. Mathew said, "Without achieving the full level of redundancy of normal oral speech, a number and range of oral features essential to listeners may be included or re-introduced into the written form" (Mathew 2005:37). Care should be taken that such a compromise does not result in a translation that is unattractive and/or inaccessible to both readers and listeners. This study promotes the production of a translation for oral use, including the oral features that make a text sound natural to listeners, rather than editing them out so the text is more readable.

Having said that, I now examine Mathew's methods for including oral style in the Dungra Bhil translation. He first translated 1 Timothy in written form. Then he revised that translation, adapting the second version to a more oral style for public reading. The back translations are shown here as examples of the inclusion of oral features in the second version, which included a narrative introduction to the book (Mathew 2005:37).

Shorter sentences were designed to serve three purposes: allowing the reader to pause to take a breath without breaking the flow of information, and reducing processing effort and easing the memory burden for the listener. The following example illustrates the difference between the two versions of verse 5:22:

Version 1 (WRITTEN)	Version 2 (ORAL)
With out knowing a person is upright or not, you should not appoint him as the church elder by praying for him by putting hand on his head.	If you want to appoint a person as the elder of the church, find out whether the person is upright or not. Then only pray for him by putting hand on his head and appoint him as the church elder.

Indirect quotations were often converted into direct quotations. An example comes from verse 1:20 (speaking of "Humanias" and Alexander): I told them, "You should not teach the believers when they gather together to worship God." This replaces the indirect quotation of the first version: "I told them not to teach the believers when they gather to worship God" (Mathew 2005:39).

Prominence markers were included in the version prepared for oral reading. The use of particle *tome* in verse 4:8 changes the first version's "If a man has a strong body it

is good for him while he lives on this earth," to "If a man has a strong body it is *only* good for him while he lives on this earth" (Mathew 2005:40).

Verse 2:11 gives an example of subject omission. Subjects may be deleted in oral style, a stylistic difference from written style:

Version 1 (WRITTEN)	Version 2 (ORAL)
When the leader of the church teaches God's Word, the women should be silent and they should hear well and learn God's Word. They should obey the words of the Church elder very well.	When the leader of the church teaches God's Word, the women should be silent and should hear well and learn God's Word. And should obey the words of the Church elder very well.

Mathew minimized the use of loan words in the second versions, incorporating Dungra Bhil idioms instead. Also, vocatives that did not appear in the first, written version were added to the revised oral version, as they are characteristic of oral language (Mathew 2005:40-41).

Mathew's approach provides useful suggestions for revising a written translation to include oral features of the receptor language. While I recommend composing the translation orally in order to produce the most natural-sounding text, rather than starting with a written translation, I applaud Mathew's careful study of the receptor language to determine specific differences between oral and written style.

Other oral features must be given attention in the translation process. For example, oral language often employs mnemonic devices, such as formulas (Once upon a

time…), rhythm and ideophones. Translators interested in producing texts for oral use must understand the importance of such features to the production of a translation that works well for oral communicators.

3.2.2.1 Oral Composition is the Best Avenue to Oral Style

Sundersingh presented two options for translation:

- Moving from source language written text to source language orality, to receptor language orality
- Moving from source language written text to receptor language written text to receptor language orality

Identifying oral features in the source language is important to presenting the original message in oral form in the receptor language, Sundersingh said, so the first option is preferable (Sundersingh 2001:134-135). While Malmstrom recommended producing a written script from which to record an oral translation, a written script necessarily makes a text less oral. The most natural sounding translation will be obtained through oral composition, following Sundersingh's approach that moves from source language written text to source language orality to receptor language orality.

Whenever possible, the person drafting the translation should be a mother tongue speaker known as a good composer in the genre in question. Ideally, the translator will not be literate in the vernacular, and thus unhampered by conventions of written style, although this is not a requirement.

Murray Salisbury presented a paper at the Bible Translation 2005 conference on the oral drafting of Psalms. The "oral-lyrical" method involves having a mother-tongue

poet listen to more than one oral version several times and then compose a song or poem orally. The poem should reflect the overall impact of the Psalm. Then the draft is checked for accuracy against versions in the language of wider communication, and revised as needed (Salisbury 2005:38). Salisbury wrote that "the oral-lyrical method seeks to improve content accuracy *only after* having composed free-flow, naturally poetic versions that convey the overall impact and mood of the poem" (Salisbury 2005:39).

The oral-lyrical method is similar to the method for drafting put forth by Branks (see section 2.7), and to that taught in OneStory workshops. The basic concept is for the mother-tongue speaker to hear several versions of the text until the story is internalized well enough for her to retell it in the receptor language. Even the first retelling should be recorded, so the translator can listen and check for mistakes. After she is satisfied that she has it right, a transcription can be made to compare and check for accuracy, if needed. Corrections should always be made by the mother tongue speaker to ensure maximum naturalness.

In the case of composing a written script for public reading, such as Mathew's project in Dungra Bhil, Wendland's techniques for improved readability (Wendland 1993) should be consulted and implemented.

3.2.3 Media-Based: The Medium Is the Message.

Making something audible does not necessarily make it an "oral" style of communication.

Making Disciples of Oral Learners

Obviously, one of the major facets of a media-based translation is oral style, but there are other considerations as well. A translation must be designed specifically for the

media that will be used to present it. Print-based translations that are meant for private reading utilize not just the grammatical and syntactical rules that are associated with good literature but also typographic and packaging considerations. Likewise, any other medium requires a translator to consider the rules that contribute to a high-quality production. Rules governing audio media differ from those of video; one obvious difference is that video requires a consideration of the impact of images on a translation.

It is important for translators to choose the appropriate media for a project and to understand how to tailor the translation for the chosen media. This section addresses those two topics.

3.2.3.1 Choose the Right Media.

There are many types of media available. In addition to radio broadcasts, cassettes, CDs for aural transmission, there are self-contained machines that allow the Gospel to be listened to without the need of a special player or even batteries. The Megavoice players record the entire Bible onto a small microchip. Galcom International produces small, solar-powered radios fix-tuned to Christian radio stations. The Talking Bible contains the complete audio New Testament in a sealed unit, and it is shaped and colored to resemble a print Bible. In addition to audio media, videos, DVDs and computer software are available, and of course the Internet has become a highly effective way to transmit God’s Word both aurally and visually. In addition to high-tech media,

public reading and oral performance are important media options whose nature must be considered when designed a translation for such use.[11]

Sundersingh wrote that Christians must take advantage of non-print media while understanding their nature and functions (Sundersingh 2001:113). Fry encouraged translators to be aware of the impact of media on an audience, arguing that any expectations the audience might have about a particular genre should be weighed against the actual content and nature of the Biblical message. He concluded that, in some cases, a particular medium may prove "inappropriate and inadvisable" for communicating Scripture, since fidelity to the dynamics of the original message is a translation goal (Fry 1999:18).

Because of media's effect on translation, it is advisable to decide which media to use before starting the project. The correct media for a particular language are those which allow a translation to be available, accessible, affordable, reproducible and sustainable, while maintaining fidelity to source texts. Any factor that creates a challenge, such as the introduction of new media to the culture, must be weighed against possible benefits. Malmstrom cautioned that video may be difficult for new viewers to understand, for example, and people may need to be taught to "read" them (Malmstrom 1989:32). This fact must be considered when choosing the best medium for transmitting Scripture.

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[11] Training in vernacular media is an important component of a translation program employing media other than print. JAARS provides training at its center in Waxhaw, NC (Porter 1995:106)

A concern related to availability and accessibility is distribution. Søgaard has said from his experiences in audio programming that when quality recordings were available, people found ways to get players for listening to them (Søgaard 1995:71). Church-based loan systems were also effective (Søgaard 1995:74). Different channels will work for different groups, but distribution must be considered when deciding on the appropriate medium for a translation. After all, if the media renders a product unavailable to most people, no matter how well produced the translation is, it fails to achieve the goal of accessibility.

3.2.3.2 How the Medium Affects the Message

Oral style differs from written style, and a print orientation will not work for audio presentation. Søgaard insisted that "a good audio-Scripture program will need a new translation made for the medium" (Søgaard 1995:72). This includes program format, which he acknowledged is a challenge. In a printed text, chapter numbers, headings, paragraphs, verses, introductions to books, pictures, reference maps and comments all add to the meaning conveyed. "The audio equivalence of these features should be included" in a non-print translation, he wrote. Maps and geographic information should be communicated aurally, and a narrator can provide introductions and necessary explanations (Søgaard 1995:73).

However, those features are not part of the original texts; therefore, while important, most of them are print-based and not essential to the question of producing an oral *translation*. Introductions to books can, and probably should, be included in oral translations, as long as it is made clear that they are not Scripture. Chapters and verse

numbers, however, do not exist in oral communication. It is probably best to accept that certain print-based conventions will not remain in an oral translation. The important question is not how to transfer those conventions, but how to organize the information so it can be processed by oral thinkers.

Regarding other features Søgaard mentioned, like maps and comments, the information they typically convey should be distributed through extra-Biblical materials and teaching.

One of the differences between written and spoken communication is the ability to review the message. Burke emphasized the importance of incorporating oral style into a non-print media translation because the audience does not have the ability in these media to stop and review text as with print (Burke 1993:106). Redundancy and mnemonic devices like formulas are features of oral style that serve this purpose for oral performance. They can serve the same purpose in recorded Scripture.

Since dialogue is popular with oral communicators, different voices used for different speakers could enhance audio recordings, as might Jarrett's recommendation of including pauses in those genres in which listener responses are expected or even required. This more closely mimics a public performance and may help effect the receptors' identification with their audio-Scriptures.

Søgaard pointed out the importance of music to an oral translation, since music conveys a message in itself (Søgaard 1995:73). The translator must take special pains to use music that is culturally appropriate and conveys the right message in keeping with the goal of dynamic fidelity to the original message. As Burke mentioned, video images

must also be dynamically faithful, and, when being introduced to a people group for the first time, special care is needed to ensure the message is accurately communicated.

One last, but not insignificant, way a translation is affected by medium is the need to make implicit information explicit. With audio media, prosodic features like intonation cannot remain ambiguous. Video adds another dimension, namely images, which also prohibit ambiguity in prosody. For example, facial expressions of speakers must be translated, and generic nouns in source texts must be made specific. This means that, just as when using oral style in general, when translating for audio and/or visual media, very careful attention must be paid to exegesis, and some decisions must be made that could be left ambiguous in print translations.

3.2.3.3 "Fixing" the Scriptures

In my research and in discussions with others, I have found that the biggest concern with oral translation regards fixing the Scriptures in a permanent form. Many people believe that the only way to accomplish this goal is through print, exposing a cultural bias toward literacy. Kelber wrote that, for literate thinkers, written translations are "'safe,' fortified against oral decay, variability, amnesia, or floating." They are "fixed in place to be studied, interpreted, copied and disseminated" (Kelber 1983:105).

I suggest that other media are as legitimate as print for securing a fixed, lasting record of God's Word. And though I have no reason to want to "do away with" the written word, I foresee a situation where a Bible translation is drafted and edited orally (using a digital recorder, for example) and recorded in oral form, with no need to commit the message to the printed page (except as required for accuracy and consultant checks).

Consequently, I recommend composing a translation for non-print media under the assumption that this version is the real, authoritative, fixed version of the Bible in this language.

In order to preserve the accuracy of the texts, they should be recorded. For nonliterate cultures, I believe that non-print media are more appropriate than print for preserving the fixed form. However, I also advocate memorization (or remembering) and oral perpetuation of Scriptures, as has occurred for centuries in oral cultures with other texts—only in this case there would be a recorded base for the sake of accuracy.

Klem referenced Biblical precedent for planning to distribute Scriptures through memorization. For an OT example, he cited the Deuteronomy 31 account of God's commandment to Moses to teach the people a song so that they could remember the things He had done for them (Klem 1982:xxii). Klem noted that Jesus Himself "left His words unwritten, trusting the oral community with His words only in their hearts and minds, with the confidence that they would perpetuate the living word orally," and he suggested that Christ's communicative strategy should be a model for us today (Klem 1982:87).

Of course, this doesn't mean that orality is the only means by which God's Word should be communicated. However, just as Biblical precedent exists for transmitting Scripture through written means (Colossians 4:7-9, 18), there is similar precedent for transmitting Scripture orally: the tradition of the disciples after the death of Christ until the Gospels were written dozens of years later.

The Limba of Ghana claim to store their oral arts, or *mbora,* in their hearts, saying, “Our hearts are our books” (Finnegan 1967, quoted in Klem 1982:106). This quotation is reminiscent of God’s promise to Israel to “put [His] law in their minds, and write it on their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33 NLT).

Wilson argued that print is not the only medium capable of storing knowledge, pointing out that oral cultures store information orally in genealogies, narratives, songs, poetry, recitations and formulas, proverbs and riddles. He said that oral cultures are distinct from print cultures in their “refined oral skills” and the orature enabling them to memorize information and then recall and communicate it in appropriate situations (Wilson 1991:4). It makes sense, then, when Carol McKinney’s Ngambay friend, on hearing of the death of her 95-year-old father-in-law, exclaimed, “A library has burned!” (McKinney 1996:2).

Several authors have cited oral language examples containing relatively fixed forms. Klem wrote that while some Yoruba orature is changeable, those texts that relate to the origins of the tribe and containing religious elements are more constant in form (Idowu 1962, quoted in Klem 1982:119-120).

Lahaye noted a similar phenomenon in Guaraní. Sacred texts use “religious” language and fixed phrases and expressions that cannot be changed. This is not true of other genres. Lahaye suggested that a good test for the fluidity of a text is the existence of variations. Within the religious orature, any variations found reflected a difference in regional language rather than in content. According to Lahaye, this lack of variation

indicates that the texts have been passed down for many years with minimal or no change (Lahaye 2003:402).

The evidence of genres with fixed forms in oral cultures signifies that at least some oral communicators are familiar with the concept that some texts are sacred and must not be changed. This knowledge, especially combined with the availability of a variety of non-print media for recording Scripture, makes it difficult to defend the proposition that a fixed Biblical base can exist only in print form.

3.2.4 Genre-Based

> Genre is perhaps the most important key to eliciting the features that guide the translator to faithful oral articulation of the original.
>
> Basil Rebera, "Translating for Oral Articulation on Audio Media – Text Analysis:Ruth1"

De Vries wrote that anytime a person speaks, people from the same speech community recognize the genre to which the speech belongs, whether it is, for example, an informal conversation or a religious creed. Genre analysis determines specific factors within a particular genre with regard to location and time, and it links language use to those factors (de Vries 1999:27). As mentioned in section 2.8, Vansina illustrated that genre is a culture-bound concept, using examples from Kuba (Vansina 1985:81). Other examples can be found among the Hamer of Ethiopia, who have several genres connected to "speech situations," including *pen gia*, for telling news; *hakati*, for "playful talk"'; *palli*, for argument or quarrel; and *irima* and *atap* for insults or swearing (Strecker 1976:583).

De Vries considers a Bible translation to be a separate genre, or macrogenre consisting of various subgenres. Missionary work created many new genres, such as the lesson, sermon, “two-way radio talk,” and Bible translation (de Vries 1999:28).

In chapter 2 the work of various authors evinced the variety of genres that exists in many oral cultures. Rather than create new genres, translators should first strive to introduce the Gospel via existing emic genres. With a wide variety of genres available in most languages, whenever it is possible, translators should utilize genres with which the receptor audience is familiar. I propose the following guidelines:

- When translating a particular text, one should try to identify in the receptor language a genre that matches as closely as possible and provides a comparable experience to that of the genre of the original Biblical text.
- In the case that no suitable genre is found for translating a particular text, translators should determine if the source text can be translated in a narrative genre from the receptor language since research suggests that narrative is well suited to oral communication.
- Finally, if it is impossible to avoid creating a new genre or a variation, the form should resemble the source genre, while employing as many emic oral features as possible to achieve both fidelity to source and familiarity to receptors.

3.2.4.1 A Variety of Genres Exist in Oral Cultures

Klem (1982), de Vries (1999), McKinney (1996), and Lahaye (2003) wrote about the variety of genres they encountered in the languages in which they worked. Lahaye,

who wrote about Guaraní genre, said that most languages contain artistry, and receptors are more likely to accept a Bible translation when it has incorporated the special artistic features of their language. He did acknowledge that at times people resist using emic genres in their Bible translations (Lahaye 2003:406). It is also likely that some genres will be deemed inappropriate, for whatever reason, for Bible translation (Fry 1999:18). For example, the limerick, a perfectly acceptable style of English poetry, is too closely linked to the silly and the bawdy to be appropriate for translating Biblical poetry. Still, Lahaye believes that when genres used in translations match those of the receptor language, the Scriptures will be better understood and more readily accepted (Lahaye 2003:407).

Cynthia Miller offered tips on translating Proverbs into African languages. Because of the preponderance of proverbs in their languages, she said Africans understand that proverbs mean more than they explicitly say. Miller wrote that “Biblical proverbs are particularly important and meaningful within an African context” (Miller 2005:130), concluding that a translation is successful if the African receptors adopt the proverbs into their everyday speech and lives (Miller 2005:144).

Miller illustrated how local proverbs can be incorporated into a Bible translation using the Dinka Padang example of Proverbs 11:25. The NRSV reads, “A generous person will be enriched; and the one who gives water will get water.” Dinka Padang has a similar proverb: “The bowl goes and the bowl comes,” meaning that the person who gives food (in a bowl) will receive food when he is in need. The translator incorporated this local proverb into the Biblical version: “The person who gives prospers, for the bowl

goes and the bowl comes" (Miller 2005:138-139). In this way, the translator made use of an emic genre. Naturally, this is easier to accomplish when the genre is very similar to that of the Biblical text being considered.

Because oral communicators respond well to narrative discourse, Brown recommended embedding non-narrative Biblical portions within narratives, such as including sections from the epistles within the book of Acts. Similarly, he suggested embedding the Proverbs, since oral communicators prefer discourse that relates to real life and do not organize thought in lists. This suggestion is reminiscent of Sundersingh's hypertextual approach to translating for audio media. Brown added, however, that full versions of the Bible could be made available for those who "come to desire them," but he feels that "the use of embedding allows Scripture to be presented in a natural and memorable way" (Brown 1995:25).

An alternative to having two translations, an incomplete but natural one and a complete but less memorable one, could be the careful use of culturally recognizable genres to represent the materials presented in non-narrative portions of the Bible. As Brown himself said, "In addition to stories, oral communicators relate well to proverbs, poetry and parables, as long as they relate to real life" (Brown 2004:125). It seems logical that oral communicators would relate well to discourse presented in their own familiar styles, and as Wendland pointed out (Wendland 1993:42-43), it would be a matter of finding the genres that resemble as closely as possible those found in the Bible.

While embedding texts may be an effective way of incorporating expository material into Biblical narratives, that approach seems better suited to storying, where no

attempt is being made to produce the entire Bible in oral form. For the present study, matching receptor language genres as closely as possible to Biblical genres is recommended, rather than promoting a strict, almost exclusive use of narrative. While the former approach allows for some reordering of Scriptures if necessary, it would less disruptive to discourse structure than embedding texts may be. Additionally, it would allow each translation to represent the richness of the receptor language with regard to genre.

3.2.4.2 Importance of Discourse Analysis

Genre is particularly important in oral cultures because it is often tied to rules governing many aspects ranging from rhythm and style to who can compose and recite texts of a particular type (cf. Lahaye 2003). With the goal of matching receptor-language genres as closely as possible to Biblical genres, careful attention must be paid to discourse analysis of a language. Constant evaluation is necessary to ensure that the translated text is the "closest natural equivalent" in both medium and genre to the original (Fry 1999:18). Sundersingh recommended that translators engage in discourse analysis of both the source and receptor languages, as "each language has a unique system of signals to communicate different kinds of discourse." He said a translation will not be clear unless the translator understands how these signals identify the larger communication units in the source language and accurately transfers them to the receptor language (Sundersingh 2001:133).

Giving careful consideration to genre and its impact on translation may be the key to fidelity in translation (Rebera 1991, quoted in Sundersingh 2001:56-57). This is no less true for oral translation.

CHAPTER 4 – THE ROLE OF THE WRITTEN WORD AND LITERACY

As already stated, I believe that an oral translation recorded via an acceptable non-print medium can serve as the fixed Bible for an oral culture. In such a case, what is the role of the written Word of God—or the written word in general? It is always acceptable to let the receptors decide what they want with regards to literacy and a written translation. However, literacy must never create a barrier separating people from access to God's Word. For oral communicators, it is better and probably easier to transition from an oral to a written translation, than to start with a written translation. A written transcription of an oral translation can be produced without difficulty, and then, as Kilham (1987), Bartsch (1997) and others have proposed, oral communicators can use their innate sense of written style to make necessary revisions, and the revision process may be repeated as often as needed. The King James Version, for example, has been revised several times, and now the New King James Version uses a modern vocabulary that is quite different from the original translation.

While the main focus of this study remains on producing an accessible translation for oral communicators, another benefit could be of comfort to those who view literacy as a necessary component of a translation program: An oral translation can help achieve literacy goals.

Jim and Janet Stahl reported on a presentation made at the National Storytelling Conference in July 2007 indicating that hearing stories either read or told enhances brain development in children, contributing to the acquisition of language and literacy skills. If

this holds true for adults as well, they said storytelling could be a means of moving an oral culture towards literacy (Stahl and Stahl 2007). Translated Biblical narratives could be integrated into a literacy program. However, an oral translation also aids literacy programs in other ways.

After working among the Nso, Grebe made two observations. First, audio recordings of Scripture are usually popular, and the privilege of listening to the cassette may entice students to attend literacy classes. Choir members have been noted as particularly receptive to literacy education because they enjoy having their songs read. In this way, the oral translation serves as a motivational device for literacy education. Second, students preferred listening, and then reading what they had heard, to learning to read without listening (Grebe 1981:15-16). Others have written regarding the effectiveness of this technique. Ansre wrote that Dagbani church leaders in Ghana reported improved reading skills after they spent time listening to audio-Scriptures and following the text (Ansre 1995:67).

According to Klem, familiarity with the Scriptures will encourage people to learn to read the written version because it is easier to read a familiar message than a foreign one. The task of learning to read is not made more burdensome by the need to understand new material when what one reads has already been memorized to some degree (Klem 1982:xxiii).

Malmstrom wrote, “Well-produced non-print media can serve to enhance the acceptance and promotion of the written Word of God” (Malmstrom 1989:35). The Unamakaina translation team used film to stir the interest of the people, and then

convinced them of the need for vernacular literacy. The team showed Bible films based on the Gospel of Luke and ran parallel literacy classes to read the materials which they had viewed on film. They reported that the films made a significant spiritual impact on the people, while also creating interest in the written Scriptures (Jesudason and Jesudason 1992:20-22).

In short, producing an oral translation to ensure access to Scriptures for an oft-neglected group of people does not preclude their ever having a written translation and the necessarily accompanying literacy skills. Of course, for this type of technique to be effective, written materials would have to be produced. Deciding what type of materials would be appropriate for an orality-to-literacy strategy is beyond the scope of this study.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

When special attention is given to the four factors listed in section 3.2, it is possible to produce a translation that provides oral communicators the full access to God's Word and meets all six goals for any translation. When recorded in an appropriate and quality medium, that oral translation can serve as a permanent Bible base, without the need for a written "backup" version. However, as previously stated, a written transcription of the oral translation is easy to produce if one is desired. If the receptor audience wants to have a readable version, they can edit the transcription according to their own written style.

Some may fear that any attempt at oral translation will violate the goals for any translation, such as faithfulness to original texts. However, in chapter 3 I weighed the factors necessary for an oral translation against those goals, and I found that, for oral communicators, an oral translation is actually more likely to *achieve* those goals. Therefore, translators do not need to fear employing oral style in order to produce an acceptable translation for oral communicators.

Furthermore, in order to be effective, an oral translation must not be considered a stopgap measure by translators. Malmstrom wrote, "In most situations where SIL teams work, non-print media are used to promote the use of written materials. They are not viewed as a substitute, but as a supplement" (Malmstrom 1989:32). I suggest that they

are neither substitute (implying inferiority) nor supplement (implying insufficiency), but a more appropriate alternative (implying equality).

If the translator's attitude is that the oral translation is stopgap, how can the people accept it as a real translation? It is not a means; it is an end—as much as any other translation is an end. Rather than a bridge, it should be considered the best translation for this time and situation, just as with any translation. Likewise, when enough people have become literate to adapt a written style, and the oral translation is no longer suitable, nothing precludes its being revised. However, the original oral translation should not be viewed as a bridge to the "real" (written) translation that will come later when the people are "smart" (literate) enough to understand it.

Kevin Jarrett, a translator among the Kanuri of Niger, wrote:

> It would be a mistake to think of the Kanuri as a preliterate society in the sense of one that is moving toward a general use of literature. They will never become a literate society, though the number of readers should increase substantially, particularly among the young. The Kanuri are, and will always remain, an oral society, as are so many of the people groups we are seeking to reach (Jarrett 1989:3).

In other words, in no foreseeable future could Jarrett envision widespread literacy among the Kanuri. The problem is to provide access to God's Word with the reasonably achievable goal of spiritual benefit. I believe the approach put forth in this study—a meaning-based translation, produced in an oral style, tailored for its intended medium of communication and sensitive to receptor-language genre—is a step in that direction.

5.1 But Is It Biblical?

Charles Kraft discussed an incarnational approach to communication. He explained that a communicator can focus on any of the three elements of a

communication act: the communicator, the message or the receptor. God, Kraft argued, is receptor oriented. He chooses relevant topics, appealing methods of presentation and a "maximally intelligible" language for His receptors. "They do not have to go somewhere else, learn someone else's language, or become something other than they already are" in order to understand the message (Kraft 1980:6-9). The final criterion could easily be applied to literacy strategy in ministry; if Kraft is right, a nonliterate receptor would not have to become literate in order to receive God's message, but God could communicate that message in a relevant, appealing and maximally intelligible, albeit nonliterate, way.

Ministry should involve incarnational communication, Kraft said, and in order to communicate like God one must be receptor oriented (Kraft 1980:19). This includes moving into the receptor's frame of reference, not vice versa. "The temptation to extract people from where they are into where we are in order that we may feel more comfortable in dealing with them is a strong temptation indeed" (Kraft 1980:21). Again, this point can be applied to literacy strategy, with specific implication for Bible translation. Literate translators undoubtedly feel more comfortable providing the Bible in print form, which would necessitate their audience's becoming literate in order to have access to the translated Word. They should ask themselves whether this is a Godlike communication strategy.

After reading so many studies regarding the nature of communication in Biblical times and the variety of methods employed in getting the message across, I am convinced that it is unbiblical *not* to use the mode and media that work best in communicating God's truth. There is nothing inherently sacred about the printed word, and, in fact, such

thinking binds God's Word to one solitary format. As Klem pointed out, using books to communicate the Gospel is not a Biblical mandate but a cultural choice (Klem 1995:59).

Sundersingh wrote, "God's Word is not meant to be locked within a given medium but to be transformed beyond the confines of any such boundaries. The primary goal, as revealed in the incarnation, is one of communication and understanding and not simply possessing and preserving… We do not need to be afraid of taking Scripture along with us into a different medium of communication" (Sundersingh 2001:113).

One frequently quoted passage gives credence to the argument for producing God's Word via audio media: "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10.17 NKJV). God spoke the world into existence and needed no written evidence of the spoken words, for creation was the evidence. He wrote the Ten Commandments on a stone with His finger. When He chose to communicate His salvation message to mankind, He did so neither through a written nor spoken word, but through a Living Word, the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught through oral means; there is no evidence that He ever wrote or instructed His disciples to write any of His messages (Klem 1995:59, Brown 1995:34). There is certainly Biblical precedent both for communicating God's Word orally and for creativity in communication methods.

5.2 For Further Study

In the process of researching and preparing this thesis, several questions arose that, while beyond the scope of this study, are germane to the topic and worth further investigation. I've listed some of those questions below.

5.2.1 Do These Predictions Hold When Tested on the Field?

The recommendations from this study needs to be field-tested, with the results helping to ensure the production of a translation that is effective for oral communicators who are not necessarily in the process of becoming literate. Do the predictions hold? Does the oral Bible translation become part of a group's oral corpus, perpetuated orally?

5.2.2 How Do Oral Communicators Study?

How do oral communicators "study," and how does that influence their definition of true access to the Bible in oral cultures?

Klem reported on a study by Alan Howard indicating that schoolchildren in collectivist oral cultures prioritize social interaction over personal achievement. They paid more attention to their classmates than to the teacher, and the teachers who encouraged group interaction were more effective than those who did not. Students were not motivated by the challenge to succeed personally. They only participated in the learning process when they were allowed to work together in "multi-directional discussions" (Klem 1982:103).

Brown wrote that oral communicators work in groups and cannot think about something for a long time without discussing it among themselves (Brown 2004:125). Could this be their equivalent of studying? If this is how they study, then their goals for accessibility can certainly be met through an oral translation. What, if anything, does the Bible say about internalizing God's Word through this type of study?

5.2.3 Are Differences between Oral and Written Style Culture-Specific, Rather Than Universal?

Rather than universal differences between oral and written style, is there a science to the method that speakers of a language use to differentiate between their oral and written styles? This could benefit translators in that, while they would not be able to enter a project with a list of universal characteristics of speech versus print, they would have certain tools to help them identify and understand the differences between the oral and written language of their respective receptor audiences.

5.2.4 How Should a Translator Handle Implicit Information in an Oral Translation?

When should a translator make implicit information explicit in an oral translation? Oral speech is contextualized, since oral communicators speak to people who are sharing their current context. They usually omit contextual references from their speech. In the case of translating from a decontextualized written text, how does one include necessary contextual information without violating the oral style that calls for the omission of such information?

5.2.5 What Criteria Determine When an Oral Translation Is Necessary?

What criteria should determine whether a translation is produced orally, via the guidelines of this study, or written, according to standard practices?

APPENDIX A – DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ORAL AND PRINT COMMUNICATORS

From Brown (1995), adapted from Ong (1982). All page numbers from Ong 1982.

Oral communicators	Print communicators	Page
learn by hearing (hearing-dominance).	learn by seeing (sight-dominance).	121
learn by observing and imitating, by listening and repeating, by memorizing proverbs, traditional sayings, stories, songs, and expressions.	learn by reading nonfiction, by studying, examining, classifying, comparing, [and] analyzing.	8–9, 41, 43
think and talk about events, not words.	think and talk about words, concepts, [and] principles.	12, 61
"use stories of human action to store, organize, and communicate much of what they know"; information is "embedded in the flow of time" usually on a "story line."	manage knowledge "in elaborate, more or less scientifically abstract categories," and store it in print rather than in stories.	140, 141
memorize information handed down from the past.	seek to discover new information.	41
value tradition.	value novelty.	41
view matters in the totality of their context, including everyone involved.	view matters abstractly and analytically.	175
learn and retain knowledge in relation to real or imagined events in human life.	learn and retain knowledge as general principles, with events as examples.	42
recite genealogies but make few lists.	make lists but recite few genealogies.	43
relate closely to the people and events they know about.	relate more objectively to what they know, because writing comes between them.	46
think and talk mostly about events and people.	think and write about their own feelings and thoughts as well.	105
reason from experience and association.	reason logically, with analysis and explanation.	172

Oral communicators	Print communicators	Page
organize nonnarrative speeches, such as exhortations and sermons, largely by mentioning events associated with the point being made or the words used.	organize nonnarrative speeches, such as exhortations and sermons, by laying out a logical progression of thoughts.	165
tend to communicate in groups.	tend to communicate one-to-one.	69, 74
learn mostly in interaction with other people.	learn mostly alone.	69
cannot think about something very long without dialogue.	can think about something for a long time while making notes about it, and so forth.	34
are deeply affected by the sound of what they hear.	are affected by the content of what they read.	73
emphasize clarity and style of speech.	emphasize clarity and validity of reasoning.	109
view speech primarily as a way of relating to people, or as a form of entertainment.	view speech primarily as a means of conveying information.	177
respond to a speaker while he is speaking and participate in a storytelling.	generally read or listen quietly, privately.	42
engage in verbal contests, trying to excel in praise, insults, riddles, jokes, and so forth.	engage in few verbal contests, but write letters to the editor, and so forth.	44
believe that oral exchange should normally be formal, carefully articulated.	believe that oral exchange should normally be informal, casual.	136
can produce, in some cases, beautiful verbal art forms, such as epic poems and ballads.	can produce, in some cases, interesting literature, but generally not verbal art forms of a high quality.	14
view a written text as a record of something spoken or an aid to memorization.	view a written text as a vessel of information.	126
often imagine the sounds of the words when they read.	take in the content but not the sound when they read.	121
prefer to read aloud to groups.	prefer to read alone.	131

Oral communicators	Print communicators	Page
communicate by joining sentences with conjunctions such as "and," "then."	communicate by joining sentences with subjunctions such as "while," "after."	37
frequently use words in set phrases, such as sayings, proverbs, riddles, formulas, or just descriptions such as "brave soldier."	generally use words independently, with few set phrases.	38
appreciate repetition, in case something was missed the first time.	do not like repetition, since material missed can be read again.	39
like verbosity (many words to say little), because speaking is fast.	like brevity (few words to say much), because writing is slow.	40
use exaggerated praise or scorn.	use moderate praise or scorn.	45
prefer heavy characters in their stories.	prefer realistic characters in stories.	70
create art forms that emphasize struggle against an enemy.	create art forms that emphasize struggle to reach a goal or overcome an obstacle.	44
use symbols, stories, to illustrate message.	use charts, diagrams, and lists.	101, 130
can organize experiences, episodes, and so forth.	can organize long, logical arguments.	57
construct longer narratives by stringing episodes together; themes may be repeated in several episodes.	construct narratives with chronologically linear plots that reach a climax and resolution; any themes are validated by the outcome.	142, 144, 147
use their hands to help express themselves when they tell stories, through gestures or by playing musical instruments.	use their hands little, since gestures are not written or read.	67, 47
leave much of the message unverbalized, depending on shared situation, shared culture, intonation, facial gestures, and hand gestures to help communicate it.	must, when writing, make the message clear without recourse to situation, gesture, or intonation.	104, 106
can be imprecise, and clarify as needed, based on the listener's reaction.	must, when writing, avoid ambiguities and vagaries.	106
avoid answering questions directly.	answer questions directly.	68
are uninterested in definitions.	appreciate definitions.	47

APPENDIX B – YOU'RE IN FOR TROUBLE!

You're in for Trouble!
Diego de Lorenzi and Esteban Voth
(Voth 2005:127-128)

You're in for trouble!
You take over house after house after house
Until there ain't no room left for us
In the hood, in our lives
I'll make this promise come true
Someone more powerful than you
Will make you pay for what you do
Will make you pay for what you do

You're in for trouble!
You keep the party on
You keep the drinkin' on and on
Until your mind gets slow
And you don't care no more
You have played deaf and blind
For too long and too much
Now time has come to pay back
And you will do it in blood
And you will do it in blood

You are headed for trouble!
You say wrong is right
You say darkness is light
You accept the bribes to let the guilty go free
You cheat the innocent to death
Bodies cover the streets like garbage
I'm running out of patience
You're running out of time
I'm running out of patience
You're running out of time

You're in for trouble
I'm running out of patience
You're in for trouble
You're running out of time

Isaiah 5:8-9a, 11-13, 20-25
NLT

Destruction is certain for you who buy up property so others have no place to live. Your homes are built on great estates so you can be alone in the land. But the LORD Almighty has sealed your awful fate.

Destruction is certain for you who get up early to begin long drinking bouts that last late into the night. You furnish lovely music and wine at your grand parties; the harps, lyres, tambourines, and flutes are superb! But you never think about the LORD or notice what he is doing. So I will send my people into exile far away because they do not know me. The great and honored among them will starve, and the common people will die of thirst.

Destruction is certain for those who say that evil is good and good is evil; that dark is light and light is dark; that bitter is sweet and sweet is bitter.

Destruction is certain for those who think they are wise and consider themselves to be clever.

Destruction is certain for those who are heroes when it comes to drinking, who boast about all the liquor they can hold. They take bribes to pervert justice. They let the wicked go free while punishing the innocent.

Therefore, they will all disappear like burning straw. Their roots will rot and their flowers wither, for they have rejected the law of the LORD Almighty. They have despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. That is why the anger of the LORD burns against his people. That is why he has raised his fist to crush them. The hills tremble, and the rotting bodies of his people are thrown as garbage into the streets. But even then the LORD'S anger will not be satisfied. His fist is still poised to strike!

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