

István Lanstyák: "Az Istennek könyve közönséges nyelven" (Bible Translation Studies)

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In the course of their work, translators strive to achieve the highest possible degree of textual equivalence, i.e., they try to convey the content of the source text as accurately as possible in the target language with as little loss of meaning as possible. This process is particularly important for Bible translations, as the Scripture text reaches millions of people who use it to guide their lives. The author of the present monograph, István Lanstyák, admits that he first became interested in Bible translations as a proofreader. His research initially focused on the relationship between translation studies and bilingual language use. Later on, he explored translation issues from the perspective of cognitive linguistics, analysing Hungarian Bible translations. In this monograph, the author summarizes his studies on the latter.

The book begins with a *Foreword*, in which the reader is introduced to the parts of the book and the content of the individual studies. The book's author explains the reason for the title choice and refers to the importance of the accuracy of Bible translations. "The title of my monograph - *Istennek könyve közönséges nyelven* [The Book of God in Ordinary Language] - is a quote from the Preface to The Bible of Vizsoly. [...] In The Bible of Vizsoly, the preacher of Gönc believes, among other things, that the Holy Scripture, which expresses God's will for people, are "perfect, complete, flawless, pure, true," and therefore do not need editing: "we must not add anything to it that we should not be seen wiser than God, nor must we take or deviate from it." This belief permeates and at the same time authenticates the translation of Károli and his collaborators, and makes its lasting impact understandable." (11). The seven studies in the book are divided into four thematic blocks. The first - *Bibliafordítás és nyelvi probléma* [Bible Translation and Language Problems] - is a study of problems that concern both the translator and the reader. The second block, *Egyenértékűség és relevancia* [Equivalence and relevance], consists of three studies, while the third block, *A Károli-fordítás és revízió* [Translation and Revision of Gáspár Károli], presents two studies. In the fourth thematic block, *Revízió – új vízió* [Revision - a new vision], the author presents his thoughts on the future of Hungarian Bible translations. The book also includes a summary in Slovak and English, followed by a long reference list. At the end of the book, there is a detailed index of subjects, names, and vocabulary.

In the first thematic block, entitled *Bibliafordítás és nyelvi probléma* [Bible Translation and Language Problems], the author shares with the reader his own experience as a proof-reader and the challenges encountered in Bible translations. He differentiates translator and addressee problems, which are divided into smaller problems. All these problems are closely related since the more problems

the translator deals with, the fewer problems the reader has to face. Then, the author further details the problems associated with the translator and the addressee. The problems attributed to the translator are interpreting the original text and text production. The former may result from the fact that a text or a passage of text may have different possible interpretations. On the other hand, text production is a more complex problem since, in addition to linguistic factors, the translator has to consider several extra-linguistic factors. Among the linguistic factors, the differences between the source and target languages, as well as the register, text type, and genre of the source text, must be taken into account by the translator; whereas among the non-linguistic factors, the translator has to take into consideration the cross-cultural differences and the social, cultural and political context of the time. Failure to pay close attention to either or both of the factors may result in serious problems in translation.

The author associates problems such as "imprecision," loss, difficulty, and "flatness" of translation with the addressee (25-26). The primary source of these problems is that the target and source language texts will never be equivalent. This is because the translator's interpretation may differ from that of the author of the source text, and the elements involved in the translation itself often have different meanings in the source and target languages. These differences may reoccur in the translator's product too. One of the most noticeable differences at the linguistic level is lost, i.e., the omission of certain elements. In addition to differences at the linguistic level, interpreting the target text may also differ. Often, the interpretation of the target text requires more mental effort from the target audience than the original text does from the original audience (25). The main reason for this is to be found in the differences between language systems, which affect the interpretative process and lead to aesthetic loss. The translator has to decide whether to strive for the formal and content equivalence, attaching less importance to aesthetic values, or to emphasize the aesthetic value at the expense of loss of form and content" (26). In both cases, the target audience gets a "flatter" text.

In the first study of the second thematic block, *A fordítás egyenértékűség néhány válfajáról* [Some Types of Translation Equivalence], the author attempts to answer the question of what constitutes an accurate or faithful translation. He links the translation accuracy to equivalence based on the similarity of the two texts, thus distinguishing between motivational, denotative, connotative, stylistic, pragmatic, structural, and textual equivalence. These aspects are based on different criteria, but most of them concern the vocabulary of the languages, except for the fifth and seventh aspects. Furthermore, the author also pays attention to the cognitive-based Relevance Theory (although it is only superficially touched upon in this study), which helps translators provide readers with "communicative clues" (39) that help them to make sense.

In the second study of this block, *Relevanciaelmélet és fordítás* [Relevance Theory and Translation], Lanstyák discusses in detail Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's 1986 Relevance Theory concerning translation. This study aims to draw attention to its usefulness. To this end, he summarises the theoretical basis of this theory and illustrates as well as supports it through his research. The new approach, which emerged after the cognitive turn in linguistics in the 1970s and 1980s, sees translation as a kind of written communication between the translator and the target audience, and therefore similar principles apply to both. According to the theory, a translated text is relevant if the processing effort invested in its interpretation aligns with the cognitive effect, i.e., the amount of new information obtained. In Lanstyák's words, "the principle of relevance expresses the intention of the translation recipients to invest in reading (or listening to) the translation as much processing effort as new information they expect from it. If they expect a lot [...], they are willing to invest a lot of effort. If they expect less [...], they expect the invested effort to be less." (61). The study elaborates on decoding and inference, cognitive environment and context, contextual effects, communicative clues, and metaphor translation. In conclusion, the author expresses the hope that, in future revisions and translations, translators who have hitherto "followed the principle of dynamic or functional equivalence" (73) will take into account the basic ideas of Relevance Theory and thus be able to make better decisions.

In the last study of the block, *Direct - Indirect - Hybrid*, the author discusses the different forms of translation indicated in the title. In the introduction, the author summarises the relevant points of Relevance Theory, which are closely related to the three types of translation. In his view, the practical application of the theory faces the translator with a decision, i.e., the translator has to decide whether to use a "direct," "indirect," or "hybrid" translation method (81-89). By direct translation method, the author means when the translator produces a translation that reproduces in another language as much as possible what the original authors intended to communicate to their readership, relying heavily on communicative clues that also reflect the source language characteristics of the message (89-90). The Indirect translation, by contrast, is a translation that is adapted to the target language audience and their assumptions about the world. Thus, the translator pays less attention to the communicative clues of the original message reflecting the characteristics of the source language and is content with their partial rendering (90). However, according to the author, the two types are only theoretical categories since actual translations include both direct and indirectly produced text fragments (89). The hybrid translation combines these two categories, which includes both methods. At this point, however, the author draws attention to the fact that it does matter which method predominates in the text. For hybrid translations in which the direct method predominates, the author uses the term 'direct translation,' while for translations in which the indirect method predominates, he uses the term 'indirect translation' (90).

The first study of the third thematic block, *A Károli-biblia 20. és 21. századi revízióinak néhány kérdéséről* [Some Issues of the 20th and 21st-Century Revisions of the Károli Bible], Lanstyák presents his research on the 20th and 21st-century versions of the New Testament of The Károli Bible from a linguistic and translation theory perspective. He clarifies that the study does not present the full results of the research but contains some general conclusions. The author compared the original Károli Bible (also known as the Vizsoly Bible) and the translations and its other versions in his research. In the first half of the study, he explains the meaning of revision as well as related notions and presents the translations/revisions included in the study. The author's primary aim was to answer the following:

- the extent to which the examined revisions have managed to adapt their language use to 20th and 21st-century Hungarian language norms;
- the extent to which the revisionists were able to eliminate linguistically or translationally incorrect or problematic features of the source translation;
- in general, how revisionists were able to transfer the message of the original Greek New Testament to the 20th and 21st-century Hungarian reader (93).

In order to shed light on these questions, the author compared numerous Bible versions with the original Vizsoly Bible and the Miklós Tótfalusi Kis version of the Bible, published in 1685. The comparison and analysis were conducted using the so-called “BibleWorks” and “theWord” computer software. In the analysis, the author focused primarily on textual faithfulness/accuracy and norm-following and wanted to highlight how the Bible and other literary works and translations highly valued by a language community can be successfully modernised (118).

Meddig Károli a Károli? [To what extent can a Károli Bible be still considered a Károli translation?] – raises the question Lanstyák in the second study of the third block, in which he presents the general conclusions to be drawn from the recent 2011 revision of the Károli Bible. In his research, the author presumes that the new revisions of the Károli Bible differ significantly from the original version since the translators not only modernized the text linguistically but also modified the concept of translation (122). The study reveals that Gáspár Károli preferred the direct translation method in the original translation, while modern versions contain indirect ones. Based on this, the author raises the question of whether there is any justification for modernizing the Károli Bible. In his view, such modernisations are necessary, but only in cases that do not fundamentally change the concept of translation and align with the principles of translation advocated by Gáspár Károli.

In the last thematic block, the author shares his thoughts *On the Future of Hungarian Bible Translations*, which is also this block's title. The study is based on the presentations given at a conference in 2013, which focused on the most important Hungarian Bible translations. As in the whole book, Relevance Theory plays an essential role in this study, too; thus, the author outlines it again. He then

discusses how to avoid translation errors that may alter the accuracy of the translation. He also shares his thoughts about the standards that the translator must follow not to modify the basic concept of translation. He notes that, in general, it is suitable for Bible translation if the text follows as much as possible "ordinary" vocabulary and sentence structure (113). He also points out that the Bible is not only to be read on religious holidays and that its message is not only for observances and Sundays but also for everyday life, so he considers its "ceremonial" translation to be wrong. This is also implied in the book's title, which states that the Bible should be read in ordinary language, as this is the only way to communicate God's word and its true message to its followers. The target audience, the everyday people, their linguistic repertoire, their cognitive environment are (also) of paramount importance in the translation of Scripture.

The problem of maintaining faithfulness, raised in the introduction part of this review, poses challenges for translators in several ways, which the author believes can be overcome by applying the Relevance Theory, which is mentioned several times in the book. With a clear flow of thought and easy-to-read language, Lanstyák demonstrates the applicability of the cognitive pragmatics approach to translation, drawing examples from Bible translations. Nevertheless, the book is proven to be an interesting read for linguists interested in translation studies and committed analysts of Bible translations in general, as the author's arguments and conclusions shed new light on problematic areas of translation.

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