

8 ORALITY AND MOOD IN ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

*It is hard to preserve in a translation the charm of expressions
which in another language are most felicitous.*¹

Jerome

0.0 Problems Associated with Translations

Jerome mentions the difficulty he had in trying to preserve in his translation the 'charm of expression' that was present in the Greek text. When making assessments concerning translations, allowance has to be made for many words and expressions in one language not corresponding specifically with those in another language. Translators also need to take into account the particular needs of those who will read or hear their translations. Some contemporary translations have been specifically made to meet the needs of readers.²

The analyses in this chapter are of eight verses from three other contemporary English translations. The focus of the inquiry is on the extent to which the orality and mood in these verses, which are assumed to be typical of the translations as a whole, are the same as that of the Greek text. In each study the English translations are progressive compared with the original version. There are also occasional references to two much earlier English translations.³ The results show that the translation of these verses do

¹ Stated by Jerome in his Preface to his translation of the *Chronicle of Eusebius of Caesarea*. Translated and quoted by Chapin (1956: 877).

² In the preface to the 1976 *Good News* version, the editors specifically state that one of their translators' main tasks was: 'to express the meaning in a manner and form easily understood by the readers'.

³ The specific needs of listeners seem to have been very much in the mind of the translators of the *KJ* version of 1611. The publishers expressly claim that it was 'authorised to be read (that is read aloud) in churches'.

not have the same ‘charm of expressions’, orality and moods as the Greek text. These are features that make that text suitable for being heard.

The issues dealt with in this chapter are not only relevant to the prior studies, but also arise from them. For example, one of the main assumptions in the earlier studies was that the biblical texts contemporary audiences read and/or hear are precise translations of the Greek text, and would thus be similar to the original text in:

- a) their orality,
- b) in the point of view of the narrator, and
- c) in the moods and attitudes of the characters.

The analyses and comparisons recorded in this chapter demonstrate that there are in reality considerable differences in all these three domains. The translations examined in the studies are: the *Jerusalem Bible (JB)*, the *Revised Standard Version (RSV)* and the *New International Version (NIV)*. Occasionally references are made to the *Rheims* and *King James (KJ)* versions, two English translations made in prior centuries.⁴

There are three separate investigative studies. In each study four verses from three contemporary English translations are compared with the Greek text. The first study is an inquiry into the extent to which these translations retain the features of orality that were identified in the fourth chapter as being present in the original version. The features detected as being present in these same four verses included: short sentences, sentences joined by conjunctions, verbs in the ‘historic present’, and emphasis obtained by words which are otherwise redundant. The second study is into the extent

⁴ The older translations referred to are: *The Authorised Version* generally known as the *King James Version* of 1611, and the *Rheims Translation (Rheims)* of 1582, often called the *Douay Version* after its OT counterpart.

to which the points of view attributed to the narrator in clauses introducing direct speech are the same in the English versions as they are in the Greek text. The third study establishes the extent to which the tones, moods and attitudes of the characters in the translations might differ from those inferred in the original version.

1.0 Features of Orality in Three Modern English Translations

In this subsection four verses in three contemporary English versions are compared with the Greek text in order to identify the extent to which they retain the features of orality that are present in the original text. The texts of the relevant clauses from the English translations are recorded in the discussions. The full texts of the three translations are set out in parallel columns in Appendix Three.

1.1 Length of Sentences and Sentences Joined by Conjunctions

When the length of sentences in translations are compared with the original allowance has to be made for it sometimes being necessary to use two or more English words to translate a single Greek word. However, often sentences are longer in the English translations because autonomous sentences connected by conjunctions in the Greek text are translated as subordinate clauses in English. Thus sometimes what are statements in the original version are recorded as being the reason for, or the result of, prior activities in the translations.⁵ Beaman asserts that such changes result in information that is asserted in one text being presupposed in the other. In her article she demonstrates the different effects of these constructions (1984: 56).⁶

⁵ This occurs when autonomous sentences in the Greek text are made subordinate to another sentence in the English translations, joining the sentences by adverbs instead of conjunctions as in the Greek text. This sometimes results in information in a subordinate sentence being an interpretative explanation for an incident or action reported in the main sentence or as the consequence of the activity.

⁶ Beaman contends that 'the major semantic difference between coordination and subordination is that the information is asserted in the former but presupposed in the latter'. The visual aspects of the former and interpretative aspects of the latter are apparent in the examples she gives. One of her examples is:

Coordination: His pockets were full and he emptied the pears into the basket.

Subordination: Because his pockets were full, he emptied the pears into the basket.

In one of the studies recorded in this chapter there are two examples of autonomous sentences being translated as subordinate sentences. The effect of such changes when texts are translated is discussed below.

As shown in the fourth chapter the Greek text at 6:30-33 consists of short sentences connected by conjunctions. In this regard the text is typical of the way information is conveyed in speech. In the three translations, but particularly in the *JB* and *NIV* versions, the conjunction καὶ (*and*) is occasionally rendered as an adverb, such as *then, now* or *so*.⁷ The result is that the sentences in these two modern translations tend to be longer and more complex than they are in the Greek text. They are also longer than those in the *RSV*, *Rheims*, and *King James* versions.⁸ The translations in the *JB* and *NIV* versions are more typical of written language than they are of the spoken language.⁹ This is evident when the translations of three sentences at 6:31b-32 in the *JB* and the *NIV* versions are compared with the Greek text, and with the *RSV* translation. The particular sentences being compared in the inquiry recorded below are comments by the narrator's concerning Jesus' directive to his disciples to come apart and rest awhile.

The *RSV* translation of ἦσαν γὰρ οἱ ἐρχόμενοι καὶ οἱ ὑπάγοντες πολλοί is: *for many were coming and going*. The conjunction καὶ (*and*) is translated in the *NIV* as *because*, so that what is asserted as a statement of fact in the Greek text is rendered in the *NIV* as the reason for Jesus giving a directive to his disciples. In both the *JB* and *NIV* the word πολλοί is rendered as *so many*, rather than as *many*. The addition of the

⁷ The *JB* and the *NIV* versions have the adverb *then* at the commencement of 6:31, and they both have *so* at the commencement of 6:32. The *RSV* has *now* at the commencement of 6:33. The Greek text has καὶ (*and*) in all these places. The *JB* and the *NIV* have one combined sentence at 6:31, whereas there are two sentences in the Greek text and in the *RSV*.

⁸ In the *Rheims* and *KJ* versions of these same verses, the Greek καὶ is consistently rendered as *and*.

⁹ For example, the number words per idea units in written language is about eleven, whereas in spoken language it is about seven (Chafe, 1985:108). Chafe asserts that processing seven words of speech takes about two seconds, and that 'there is a limit to the amount of information on which a person's attention can be focused at one time' (1985: 106).

word *so* puts the accent on the number of people coming and going, rather than on the activity itself. The inference in these translations is that the problem is related to the large number of people who were coming and going, rather than the incessant activity of both the disciples and the public generally.¹⁰ In the Greek text the accent is on the activity, with the scene being easy to visualise, particularly when the sentences are heard.¹¹

At 6:31b the *RSV* translation of καὶ οὐδὲ φαγεῖν εὐκαίρουν is: *and they had not leisure even to eat*. In the *NIV* and *JB* versions this sentence is subordinate to the prior one due to the conjunction καὶ (and) being translated as *that*. At 6.32 the *RSV* translation of καὶ ἀπῆλθον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ' ἰδίαν is: *and they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves*. In the *NIV* and *JB* the conjunction καὶ is translated as *so*. These texts thus proclaim the departure of Jesus and his disciples to be the direct result of Jesus' directive. This is a reasonable assumption to make. However, the Greek text and the *RSV* translation leave such inferences for readers and listeners to make. In those texts it is the actions involved in the departure that are stated, with the result that listeners would find it easier to visualise the activities described in those texts than they would upon hearing it described as recorded in the *NIV* and *JB* versions.

¹⁰ In the Greek text the disciples are not excluded from the activity of coming and going. The prior verb in the third person plural referred to the disciples.

¹¹ The first indicative verb ἦσαν asserts that *many were coming and going*; the second with the adverb is *they were not able*.

1.2 Verb in the ‘Historic Present’

At 6:31 the tense of the verb λέγει (*he says*) is a ‘historic present’, being a verb in the present tense describing an action which took place in the past. A few verses further on, at 6:37-38, there are three more verbs in the ‘historic present’.¹² There are no verbs in the present tense in any of the contemporary translations, thus these versions lack the sense of immediacy which the use of the historic present imparts into scripts. In the English translations made in former centuries, some of the verbs are rendered in the historic present.¹³

1.3 Emphasis by Words that are otherwise Redundant

In the clauses εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ’ ἰδίαν (*into a desert place apart*) at both 6:31¹⁴ and 6:32, the adjective ἔρημον (*desert* or *desolate*) indicates that the location is a place apart. The words κατ’ ἰδίαν (*apart* or *by oneself*) are unnecessary except for the purpose of emphasis, as they do not provide any additional information about the location. However on both occasions the inclusion of the phrase κατ’ ἰδίαν does emphasise the desolate nature of the place. The translators of the contemporary versions ignore the presence of κατ’ ἰδίαν at 6:31,¹⁵ and translate it as *by themselves* at 6:32. The emphasis at 6:32 in the translations is thus on the disciples being apart from the crowd, rather than the emphasis being on desolate nature of the place. Even the effect attained by the repetition of the word ἔρημος (*desert* or *desolate*) is negated in the *NIV* version, as on each occasion a different English word is used to translate

¹² The verbs are συνάγονται (*they gather together*) at 38a, and λέγουσιν (*they say*) at 6:37 and 38b.

¹³ The *KJ* and the *Rheims* have two verbs in the present tense at 6:38 and the *KJ* has another verb in the present tense at 6:37b. The reason these translations do not have one of the verbs at 6:31 in the present tense may be because they were using variant Greek text which has εἶπεν (*he said*).

¹⁴ The phrase is in the opposite order at 6:31.

¹⁵ At 6:31 the translators of the *JB* may have combined κατ’ ἰδίαν with the prior word αὐτοὶ (*yourself*) in their translation, as they have *all by yourself*.

ἔρημος.¹⁶ The emphasis on the desolate nature of the place is retained in the *Rheims* and *KJ* versions, which, as stated previously, are translations made in prior centuries.¹⁷

1.4 Ambiguity

The sentence at 6:33 is ambiguous as καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν πολλοί (*and many recognised*) does not indicate who, or what, the crowd recognised. Listeners do not have time to choose between the various possibilities, and it is not really desirable that they try to do so, as this would direct their attention away from the activities of the crowd to what they may be recognising. The sentence is an example of the ‘positive and productive use of ambiguity’,¹⁸ and it is typical of one type of ambiguity that is quite prevalent in speech. There is no ambiguity in English versions as the translators have removed it in their renditions. The *JB* has: *and many guessed where*, while the *RSV* and *NIV* have: *but many ... recognised them*. Stephen Prickett, a former professor of English at Australian National University, criticises modern English translations for trying to avoid ambiguity. He refers to the notes of John Bois, who was a translator and a member of one of final revision committees for the *KJ* translation. According to Prickett, Bois recorded ‘that he and his committee were careful in general to preserve textual ambiguity’ (1986: 9). Ambiguity is generally not considered to be fitting in texts produced for readers. The editors of the *Good News Bible* of 1976 assert in the

¹⁶ The *NIV* has *quiet place* at 6:31 and *solitary place* at 6:32. The other two English texts translate both phrases containing these words as *lonely place*.

¹⁷ The phrase κατ’ ἰδιαν is translated as *apart* in both places in the *Rheims* version, and as *apart* and *privately* in the *KJ*.

¹⁸ Paul Ricoeur uses this phrase when referring to the dual meanings, literal and figurative, of metaphors in poems (1976: 47). However the principle he espouses, that readers do not have to choose between the two possible meanings in the instance he gives, is also applicable to other types of ambiguity.

Preface to the edition that ‘every effort has been made to use language that is ... unambiguous’.

1.5 Balanced Clause

There is rhyme and rhythm in the balanced clauses at 6:32, which the *RSV* and the *KJ* translate as *For many were coming and going*. Each clause has eight syllables, one ending in the sound -νοι, and the other ending with the sound -λοι.

ἦσαν γὰρ οἱ ἐρχόμενοι	<i>For they were coming</i>
καὶ οἱ ὑπάγοντες πολλοί	<i>and many were going</i>

Listeners find it easier to remember balanced clauses than they do to remember straight prose.¹⁹ None of the English translations render this sentence as a balanced clause. The inclusion of the word *so* in the *NIV* and *JB* makes those translations even more complex than the renditions in the *RSV* and the *KJ* versions.

1.6 Conclusion Based on the First Inquiry

This brief analysis of the four verses at Mk 6:30-33 in three modern English translations shows that they lack many of the features of orality that are present in the Greek text, and which are present in the English translations made in earlier eras.

¹⁹ This is generally acknowledged to be the case. It is illustrated by the way people can remember the *KJ* version of the twenty third psalm, but are usually unable to remember any verses from other English translations.

2.0 The Point of View of the Narrator

2.1 As Conveyed by Phraseology in the Introductory Clauses

This particular study is limited in both the types and the number of clauses that are examined. The inquiry is focused on the phraseology used in the five clauses at 6:35-38 that introduce direct speech. Such clauses are, of course, only one of several ways that the point of view of the narrator is conveyed in Mark's Gospel.²⁰ The objective in this particular inquiry is to establish if the point of view of the narrator inferred in these five clauses in the three contemporary English translations differs from that inferred in the Greek text. The comparisons are between the clauses as recorded in the contemporary versions and more literal translations of the same clauses. The text of the relevant clauses are recorded in the various discussions. The three English translations of Mk 6:35-38 are set out in Appendix Three.

2.2 Changing the Narrator's Point of View

Sometimes only a few words in a text need be altered to change the attitude and opinions conveyed by the narrator's point of view. Susan Lanser demonstrates this by merely changing a few words in the opening lines of novels. She also endorses the assertions of other scholars that the point of view of the narrator 'controls the point of view ... of everything else' (1981: 11-12). While authors obviously determine the point of view that narrators convey to narrative audiences, translators may not always convey the same point of view in their translations. The differences may be insignificant when such translations are read. However, as shown in Chapter Three,

²⁰ Rhoads asserts that the point of view is conveyed on four different planes, one of which is phraseology, 'the words that introduce or identify the point of view in dialogue'. According to Rhoads the other three 'planes' by which narrators' points of view are shown are the ideological, the spatial and temporal, and the psychological planes (1982: 421).

listeners are particularly attuned to notice and be affected by the point of view of narrators. It is therefore of considerable significance if the translations of the stories that are heard do not accurately reflect the same point of view as that implied in the original text.

2.3 Directives in Introductory Clauses

The importance of the 'explicit and implicit directions' or performance utterances in the introductory clauses in Mark's Gospel has been noted by Rhoads. He asserts that:

when the story says that people were afraid or amazed or alarmed, these are 'stage directions' When the story says that someone cried out or pleaded, these are guidelines for delivering a line.... Patterns in the rhetoric, lengths of sentences, the introduction of new information, and the presence of rhetorical questions all affect the pace and rhythm of the storytelling.... the intensity of a conflict, and the content of dialogue all become guides to determine subtext' (1992b: 105-6).

Those reading biblical texts aloud would tend to intuitively adjust the tone and pitch of their voices, and their speed of delivery, according to the directives in the clauses introducing direct speech. Listeners not only discern such information from the reader's delivery, but also from the information contained in the introductory clauses. For example introductory clause such as 'they were saying' indicate that the speakers are repeating what they are saying. Clauses such as 'they said' indicate that the statement was not repeated. As shown below, the introductory clause at 6:35 in the three contemporary translations differs from the Greek text in this regard.

The point of view of the narrator is sometimes inferred by the conjunction that is used in the clause introducing a reply to prior discourse. The conjunction *but* in such introductory clauses will normally indicate that the utterance which follows will

express an opinion contrary to that expressed by the prior speaker.²¹ In addition to foreshadowing a different opinion or sentiment, the conjunction *but* tends to infer that the narrator favours second opinion.²² Unlike the Greek text, the introductory clauses in the English translations at 6:38a do not foreshadow that the speaker will express a different point of view.

In the three English translations the verbs at 6:37b, 6:38a and 6:38b are in the past tenses, whereas they are in the present tense in the Greek text. The use of verbs in the historic present in introductory clauses not only gives an impression of immediacy to the narration, but also draws attention to the narrator's enthusiasm for the story itself.²³ In the two sentences below, the enthusiasm of the narrator in telling the story is more obvious in the second passage than in the first.

Bill ran into the house and *said* 'The dog bit me.'

Bill ran into the house and *says* 'The dog bit me.'

The extent of the differences mentioned above is indicated in the following comparative studies. The translation in the first column is a more or less literal translation of the Greek text. The sentence in the last line of the second column is a harmonised version of the English translations. The last lines in each column are thus solely to facilitate the comparisons of the various translations with the Greek text.

²¹ The differences can be seen in the following example:

John said 'The house is old'; *and* Bill said 'It is really quite new'.

John said 'The house is old'; *but* Bill said 'It is really quite new'.

²² For example the retort by Bill is more emphatic in the passage: 'John said "The house is old", *but* Bill said "It is really quite new".' The point I am making is more obvious if the conversations are reversed. When the narration is: 'Bill said "The house is really quite new", *but* John said "It is old".' the statement by John is more emphatic.

²³ Verbs in the present tense in these clauses also emphasise the role of the narrator as they draw attention to the narrative form of the communication (Fabb, 1997: 168).

At 6:35 the translations do not indicate that the disciples are repeating what they are saying, whereas the Greek text indicates repetition.

Προσελθόντες αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ἔλεγον	<i>RSV</i> his disciples came to him and said
	<i>JB</i> his disciples came to him and said
	<i>NIV</i> so his disciples came to him....They said
<i>coming to him his disciples were saying</i>	<i>his disciples came to him and said</i>

At 6:37 the translations only indicate that Jesus responds (answers), whereas the Greek text indicates that he will also issue a directive.

ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς	<i>RSV</i> But he answered them
	<i>JB</i> He replied
	<i>NIV</i> But he answered
<i>But answering he said to them</i>	<i>But he answered</i>

At 6:37b, 6:38a and 6:38b the verbs in the translations are in the past tense:

6:37b καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῷ	<i>RSV</i> And they said to him
	<i>JB</i> They answered
	<i>NIV</i> They said to him
<i>And they say to him</i>	<i>They said to him</i>

At 6:38a the translations do not foreshadow that Jesus is going to express a contrary point of view. The clauses in the *JB* and *NIV* infer that Jesus' response will only contain a question, whereas in the Greek it also includes an order *Go and See!*

ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐτοῖς	<i>RSV</i> And he said to them
	<i>JB</i> He asked
	<i>NIV</i> He asked
<i>but he says to them</i>	<i>He asked</i>

At 6:38b the translations infer there is a delay in the disciples finding out, whereas there is no such inference in the Greek text.

καὶ γνόντες λέγουσιν

RSV And when they had found out they said

JB And when they found out they said

NIV When they found out they said

and having known they say

And when they found out they said

2.4 Conclusions Based on the Second Inquiry

The following table summaries the results of the inquiry into the clauses introducing direct speech at 6:35-38. The comparisons indicate the introductory clauses differ by indicating that:

	In the Greek text	In the three translations
6:35	the disciples are repeating their comment or complaint,	they make a single statement,
6:37a	Jesus in his response will also issue a directive,	that Jesus will merely answer his disciples,
6:38a	Jesus will express a contrary point of view.	does not indicate that Jesus will express a contrary point of view,
	In three clauses the verbs are in the historic present, imparting a sense of immediacy to the text.	The verbs in these clauses are in the past tense.

3.0 The Mood and the Attitude of the Disciples

This final investigation is into the moods and the attitudes of the disciples as depicted in two of their utterances in 6:35-37. These are the only utterances by the disciples in these verses.²⁴ Because their first one is very long, an assessment is made of their two short assertions at 6:35b before the balance of their utterance at 6:36 is discussed. The texts are the same as those used in the last inquiry and are set out in Appendix Three.

3.1 Comparing the Utterances

It is in 6:35 that the disciples approach Jesus saying: Ἔρημος ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος καὶ ἤδη ὥρα πολλή (*this place is desolate, and already the hour is late*). The first part of their assertion could be: *this place is desolate*. It depends on whether ἔρημος is read or heard as being a noun or an adjective.²⁵ However, this aspect is of no importance as the meaning and insinuations are the same irrespective of whether or not ἔρημος is a noun or an adjective. The imperfect tense of the verb ἔλεγον (*they were saying*) implies that the disciples are repeating these clauses and thus that they are asserting or complaining to Jesus concerning the location itself, and the length of time they have been there.

A harmonised version of the three contemporary English translations would be: *they said, 'This is a lonely place and the hour is now late'*. In the *RSV* and the *JB* the first

²⁴ There is a third response in the next verse, that is at 6:38. However, this responses is only of a few words disclosing the number of loaves and fishes they have.

²⁵ If it is a noun, the statement is: *this place is a desert*. If it is an adjective the statement is *this place is desolate*. This issue is dealt with in more details at 3.1 and 3.2 in my first study in Chapter Five. There I pointed out that if ἔρημος is a noun, being without an article, it is the subject. The complement is the noun with the article which is after the verb 'to be' (Wenham, 1991: 35). I also point out that if ἔρημος is an adjective, the construction is the predicative use of the adjective with the verb 'to be' (Wenham, 1991: 50).

clause is rendered as *'this is a lonely place'*, while in the *NIV* it is *'this is a remote place'*. The grammatical constructions of the Greek text would need be very different for either of these renditions to be correct.²⁶ In the *JB* ὥρα πολλή (*a late hour*) is translated as *getting late* thus reducing the emphasises on the lateness of the hour.

The above analysis indicates that the Greek text infers that the disciples are complaining when they come to him saying *this place is desolate and already the hour is late*. On the other hand the English versions seem to imply that the disciples are informing Jesus that the time has come for the crowd to depart.

The disciples go on to say ἀπόλυσον αὐτούς (*send them away*). The translation in the *JB* is *'so send them away'*. The inclusion of the word *so* in that translations weakens the imperative force of the disciples' demand. They continue by saying ἵνα ἀπελθόντες εἰς τοὺς κύκλῳ ἀγροῦς καὶ κώμας ἀγοράσωσιν ἑαυτοῖς τί φάγωσιν (*that having gone into the surrounding country and villages they can buy for themselves something to eat*).

The verb in this sentence is ἀγοράσωσιν (*they can buy*) while ἀπελθόντες (*having gone*) is a participle. The emphasis in the Greek text is thus on the crowd having to buy their own food. However, the emphasis is different in the three translations due to the participle ἀπελθόντες (*having gone*) being translated as a verb,²⁷ whereas the

²⁶ For these translations to be correct the Greek would need to have the article in the attributive position as ἐστὶν ὁ ἔρημος τόπος or ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὁ ἔρημος.

²⁷ The participle ἀπελθόντες (*having gone*) is translated as *to go* in the *RSV*, as *so they can go* in the *NIV*, and as *they can go* in the *JB*.

inference in the Greek text is that Jesus should dismiss the crowd so they can buy their own food.

The second utterance attributed to the disciples is recorded at 6:37b. It is their response to Jesus' directive that they should feed the crowd. They respond with a rhetorical question Ἀπελθόντες ἀγοράσωμεν δηναρίων διακοσίων ἄρτους καὶ δώσομεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν; (*Having gone, are we to buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?*). Both the verbs: ἀγοράσωμεν (*shall we buy*) and δώσομεν (*shall we give*) echo, if not mimic, words that have already been used in the dialogue.²⁸ There is thus a tone of mock astonishment in their reply. The emphasis in the Greek text is on buying and giving, whereas the emphasis in the *JB* and *NIV* versions is on going and spending. The questions in those versions commence with: *Are we to go and spend - ?* The *JB* translation does not even mention *giving*. The *JB* and *NIV* translations stress the large amount of money needed, whereas the Greek text stresses the disciples' astonishment, or mock astonishment, that they should be expected to buy food and give it to the crowd.

3.2 Conclusions Based on the Third Inquiry

The analyses of the mood and attitudes of the disciples inferred in the disciples' utterances in the English translations are significantly different from those inferred in the Greek text. This is more particularly the case with the *JB* and *NIV* translations. In the Greek text the disciples' utterances 'sound' like complaints, and the directives they give their master 'sound' rude. There is also an inference of mock astonishment

²⁸ In their prior utterance, the disciples state that the crowd should go, and Jesus had just directed them to give the crowd something to eat.

when they question whether they are to buy food and give it to the crowd. In the three translations the disciples' moods are not as strongly indicated as in the Greek text. In the translations, the utterances of the disciples do not have the tones of dissatisfaction and mock surprise.

4.0 Conclusion

The first study in this chapter shows that the three contemporary translations do not have some of the features of orality that are present in the Greek text, and which make that text suitable for being heard. The other two studies show that the point of view of the narrator, and the moods and attitudes of the disciples in the Greek text are different from those stated or inferred in the three contemporary English translations. The results indicate why many of those listening to stories read from contemporary English translations may not have discerned the moods and attitudes of the characters that have been identified in the ten studies recorded in Chapter Five.

The findings also confirm the prudence of using the Greek text in the research, and in not relying on English translations. These findings also highlight the need for those selecting biblical texts for use in liturgies and public readings to choose ones that are specifically translated for being heard.²⁹

²⁹ The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA commissioned the *NRSV* specifically to meet the needs of listeners, however, according to Malbon, its translation of Mark's Gospel does not have the conversational tone of the original. Malbon says the 'conversational effect is nearly lost in the *NRSV*' (2002: 56).

9 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESULTS

*We must take oral hermeneutics into account
for understanding the Gospel.¹*

Joanna Dewey.

1.0 The Significance of the Results Attained in the Ten Studies

The results attained in the ten studies in Chapter Five demonstrate that the kinds of interpretation listeners make will often be substantially different from the types readers make. The assessments made in those studies are significant. The outcomes attest to the necessity of taking into account ‘oral hermeneutics’ in order to understand biblical texts (Dewey, as quoted above, 1989: 34). While the interpretations readers and listeners make will at times be somewhat the same, they will, as shown in the studies in this thesis, often substantially differ in their essential characteristics.

Evidence as to the interpretations made by biblical scholars as well as evidence from the analyses of the texts has validated the results. Of equal importance this evidence has validated the method used to identify the types of interpretations readers and listeners are likely to make. Therefore both results obtained and the methods used have relevance to biblical studies generally, despite the texts used in the ten studies being all from a particular section of Mark’s Gospel. Admittedly, however, the results are more particularly relevant to those texts that are narratives, or have substantial narrative sections.

¹ Dewey (1989: 34).

Not only are the results of these studies relevant to other biblical texts, but the same method and theories can be used to obtain prototypes of the kinds of interpretation people are likely to make when they are listening to biblical texts. For example, preachers can advantageously apply the theories recorded in this thesis when preparing their homilies. By doing so they can discern the kinds of interpretation members of their congregations are likely to make when they are listening to a rendition of that text. The method can also be used by those engaged in the wider field of biblical studies. By the methods used in this thesis they would be able to identify a wider range of interpretations than those they would normally ascertain by scrutinising the texts merely as written documents. The results also draw attention to the need for scholars to consider both the orality of biblical texts and the pervasive effect stories can have on listeners.

2.0 The Significance of the Three Studies in Chapter Eight

The results attained in the studies in the last chapter demonstrate the desirability of using translations that are particularly suited to being heard. The three English versions reviewed in that chapter are typical of those currently in use in churches in English speaking countries. Such versions adequately meet the needs of readers. However, the data recorded in that chapter shows that these translations do not adequately meet the specific needs of those who as members of congregations would hear these stories.

The problem is not that translators and biblical scholars are unaware of the need. They have been conscious of the exigency for a long time. It is over twenty years

since Robert Alter and Walter Ong wrote stressing the need for texts which would specifically meet the needs of listeners (1981: 83; Ong, 1982: 37-38).² Ten years later David Rhoads and the translator Basil Rebera were again stressing the need for such texts (Rebera, 1992: 230; Rhoads, 1992b: 109 and 236).³ Apart from some notable exceptions their protestations have largely been ignored in the broader fields of biblical studies and by religious leaders.⁴

The problem is thus not a lack of awareness by translators and biblical scholars. The problem seems to be due to the lack of concern by those who determine which versions are to be read aloud in Churches. In order to convince such authorities it will probably be necessary for scholars to conduct and publish many more studies, some of which could profitably be along the lines of the studies recorded in this thesis.

However, the church authorities would not only have to be convinced of the need for such translations, but also of the validity of the translations that are made to meet the specific needs of listeners. There is always resistance to changes of this nature. Scott

² Alter drew attention to the practice of repeating the same word or phrase in biblical narratives and spoken language generally. Often there are slight variations in the repetitions, such as changes in the tenses of verbs. He points out that repetitions of key-words are retained in the *KJ Version*. Alter asserts that 'most modern translations go to the opposite extreme, constantly translating the same word with different English equivalents for the sake of fluency and supposed precision' (1981: 93). Walter Ong, in support of his assertion compared the opening verses of Genesis in the *Douay* version of 1610 with the 1970 *New American translation* (1982: 37-38).

³ Rhoads asserts that 'translations have been made primarily to convey meaning to a reading audience', and that few translations take 'into consideration the oral impact of the rhetoric on an audience' (1992b: 109). Later he says that 'translators are mostly ... guided by the expectation that readers have of the print medium. When we translate for the sound medium, however, we need to ... be guided by the expectation that a listening audience has of the sound medium' (1992: 236).

⁴ Among the more notable exceptions are: Dewey, Boomershine and David Rhoads, those who commissioned a recent edition of *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*, and those involved with some specific research projects for the American Bible Society. The *NRSV* has produced a translation specifically to meet the needs of listeners. The translation was commissioned by National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA.

Elliott mentions the opposition the Research Centre of the American Bible Society encountered when it attempted to produce non-written ‘translations’ (2001: 67). However, further studies, such as those undertaken in this thesis, should gradually convince more and more of those in authority of the need for, and also the validity of, such translations. Such translations would ideally reflect the oral background of the original texts, and have rhetorical features similar to those that are in the primary documents. They would then have paralinguistic features similar to those which in past centuries facilitated the oral delivery of biblical texts.

3.0 Orality and the Bible - the Power of the Spoken Word

Orality is a quality that has in earlier eras been ‘specifically identified with the Bible’ (Marks, 1998:22). The Prophets and the Psalmists *cried out* to their fellow Israelites to listen to God’s message.⁵ The prophetic nature of John the Baptist’s witness is described as *a voice* in all four Gospels (Mt 3:1; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:3; Jn 1:23). The composition and style of the biblical texts attest to their orality. In the original language, these texts have rhetorical features such as balanced clauses, rhymes, rhythm and repetitions of root words which are all associated with sound. There are also many more references to hearing in these texts than there are to reading. For example the verb ἀκούειν (*to hear*) occurs more than ten times as often in Mark’s Gospel as the verb ἀναγινώσκειν (*to read*).⁶

⁵ *Listen to me, you who pursue integrity* (Isaiah, 51:4); *Listen, you people, all of you* (Micah, 2:1); *Come and Listen, all you who fear God* (Psalm 66:16).

⁶ The verb ἀκούειν occurs on forty occasions and the verb ἀναγινώσκειν on only three occasions. While the reader is directed *to understand* at Mk 13:14, the crowd is called by Jesus *to listen* at 4:3 and 7:14, and three of the disciples are called upon *to hear* at 9:7. Jesus makes a general call for *those who have ears to hear* at 4:9 and 4:23. There is also a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures at 12:29 where Israel is called upon to hear.

Biblical texts were composed to be heard and they are most effective when they are heard. Translations made for listeners should ideally have the same vitality and dynamics the Greek or Hebrew texts have when they are heard. Such texts would then have the potential to inspire and persuade listeners just as the original texts have inspired and persuaded generations of listeners in the past.

Stories narrated orally enable listeners to enter into the world of the story, and be transformed by the aesthetic experience. Through their auditory imagination they enter a world that is significantly different from their own. The strangeness of that world would cause many listeners to reconsider their own presuppositions. This is the effect produced by stories that are told by good storytellers. There is even more potential for change when the stories being heard are from a biblical text. This is because most of those who listen to such renditions believe that the stories are based on historical truths, even if they are not strictly historical by contemporary standards. The vitality of biblical texts is thus best realised when the contents are heard. After all, sounds and the spoken words are by their very essence lively and dynamic.⁷

It is thus extremely important that scholars and church officials be more cognisant of the specific needs of listeners. Even in very literate communities, more Christians listen to biblical texts being read, than read such texts for themselves. In fact, due to advances in technology associated with the electronic media, the range of listeners' experiences in the fields of oral-aural communications is increasing rather than diminishing.

⁷ Ronald Hall remarks that he feels 'an urge to move with sound, to dance', and that 'sound *invades* us' (1986: 32). George Kennedy suggests that we should always read the bible aloud for he says that we need 'to read the Bible as speech' (1984: 6).

It is to be hoped that at least some of those who determine which texts are to be used in Church will become aware of the outcomes of the studies recorded in this thesis. The results should convince some of them to choose versions that are more suitable for being heard than those they previously selected. The selected texts should, of course, have contemporary phraseology. However it is also important that they be eminently suitable for being heard.

4.0 Conclusion

The many studies recorded in this thesis conclusively show that the kind of interpretations made by those *silently reading* a biblical text are often different from the types of interpretation people make when they are *listening* to a rendition of the same text. Despite the texts used in the studies varying in content and size, the results are consistent in all cases. Almost all the assessments made are confirmed by evidence based on the published opinions of biblical scholars.

The results obtained in ten studies have shown that the methods used have particular relevance for the interpretations of and contemplation of biblical texts. The results also have the potential to encourage more people, including biblical scholars, to read aloud the biblical texts they are studying.⁸ They would then be complying with Jesus' directive when he says: *hear me, all of you, and understand* (Mk 7:14).⁹

⁸ Boomershine asserts that 'we need to study and experience the texts in their original medium, namely, as sounds recited and heard at least in private but preferably in public readings' in order to fully appreciate the full potential of the texts (1987: 54).

⁹ The Greek text at Mk 7:14 is ἀκούσατε μου πάντες καὶ σύνετε.

APPENDIX ONE

Summary of the Theories Enunciated in Chapter Three

The data recorded in that chapter indicates that people tend to:

When reading:	When listening:
remember the words they read	remember the gist of stories they hear *
read and interpret texts linearly	interpret what they hear additively
are able to carry out cognitive thought, investitive tasks and analyse texts	find it difficult to carry out analytical tasks
mentally identify themselves with a particular character or group	identify themselves sequentially with all the characters in stories and narratives
notice potential ambiguity in texts	not notice much of the ambiguity in speech
expect the theme to be indicated early in the text	expect the 'sense point' to be at or near the end of the utterance or story
are inclined to overlook sarcasm and irony	discern when statements are sarcastic or ironic
do not particularly notice the mood in texts	are aware of the emotive aspects and mood in utterances and the attitudes attributed to characters
notice propositional inferences, those based on logic	notice enabling inferences

* The ability of people to recall the actual words they hear is enhanced by rhetorical devices such as rhythm, rhyme, balanced clauses and repetitions.

The data also indicates that people tend to:

- find it easier to carry out imaging while listening than when reading.
- when listening to accept the point of view of the narrator
- expect the language they read to be more precise than the language they hear

APPENDIX TWO

Additional data relating to the meaning of ἐπί at Mk 6:52.

See Study 2, Chapter 5

The preposition ἐπί is a common word in Mark's Gospel. It occurs 75 times, 21 times with the genitive, 35 with the accusative and 16 with the dative. It has different meaning according to the case with which it is used. At 6:52 it is used with the dative case. With the dative case ἐπί can mean:

- of place, *on*, etc., literally or figuratively,
- of time, *at, on the occasion of*, or
- 'the basis or grounds for an action' (Zerwick, 1963: 42, # 126).

The Sixteen occasion in which ἐπί occurs with the dative case in Mark's Gospel are:

At 6:25, 28, 39, 55 and 1:45, that is on five occasions, it signifies **place**: such as *on a dish*, and *on the grass*.

At 9:37, 39; 13:6 and 29, that is on four occasions, it signifies **place** but in a **figurative sense**. Thus At 9:37, 39 and 13:6 it means *in my name*, and at 13:29 it means *at the door*, but with an implication that *the time is near*.

At 1:12, 3:5, 10:24, 11:18 and 12:17, that is on five occasion, it is used as '**the basis or grounds for an action**'. Thus at 1:22 and 11:18 it means *at his teaching*; and at 10:24 *at his word*, and at 3:5 *at the hardness of their hearts*, and at 12:17 *at him*.

At 6:52 and 10:22 ἐπί signifies **time** such as *on the occasion of*. Thus at 10:22 the phrase ἐπί τῷ λόγῳ can be translated as: *at the word*, referring to *what he said*. At 6:52 the phrase ἐπί τοῖς ἄρτοις can be translated as *on the occasion of the loaves*, or more colloquially: *at the feast*.

Max Zerwick and May Grosvenor consider that ἐπί τοῖς ἄρτοις at 6:52 literally means ‘on the occasion of’ However, they add:

about the loaves, i.e., what was involved in the multiplication of the loaves, what the miracle meant’ (1981: 126).

The text does not refer to miracles or multiplications and the translation of ἐπί as *about* is more in the way of interpretation rather translation.

APPENDIX THREE

Three English Translation at 6:30-33 and 6:35-38

English Translations of the Text at Mk 6:30-33

JB	RSV	NIV
6:30 The apostles rejoined Jesus and told him all they had done and taught. 31 Then he said to them, 'You must come away to some lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while'; for there were so many coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. 32 So they went off in a boat to a lonely place where they could be by themselves. 33 But people saw them going, and many could guess where; and from every town they all hurried to the place on foot and reached it before them.	6:30 The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them.	6:30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' 32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.

English translations at Mk 6:35-38

JB

6:35 By now it was getting very late, and his disciples came up to him and said, 'This is a lonely place and it is getting very late, ³⁶ so send them away, and they can go to the farms and villages around about, to buy themselves something to eat'. ³⁷ He replied, 'Give them some-thing to eat yourselves', They answered, 'Are we to go and spend two hundred denarii on bread for them to eat?' ³⁸ 'How many loaves have you?' he asked 'Go and see.' And when they had found out they said, 'Five, and two fish'.

RSV

6:35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, 'This is a lonely place, and the hour is now late; ³⁶ send them away, to go into the country and villages round about and buy themselves something to eat.' ³⁷ But he answered them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said to him, 'Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?' ³⁸ And he said to them, 'How many loaves have you? Go and see.' And when they had found out, they said, 'Five and two fish.'

NIV

6:35 By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.' ³⁷ But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.' They said to him, 'That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?' ³⁸ 'How many loaves do you have?' he asked. 'Go and see.' When they found out, they said, 'Five - and two fish.'