

Beyond Philology No. 16/4, 2019
ISSN 1732-1220, eISSN 2451-1498

<https://doi.org/10.26881/bp.2019.4.02>

Style of religious texts as a potential hindrance in interpreter training

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*Received 22.02.2019,
received in revised form 19.06.2019,
accepted 04.09.2019.*

Abstract

According to the thematic progression model of Janikowski (2011) religious texts can be used at the early stages of interpreter training. The reservations against such placement of allegedly stylistically sophisticated texts are scrutinised in the following paper by means of (1) developing a set of features of spoken religious discourse and (2) empirically testing their frequency in a convenience corpus. The results do show an unexpectedly high level of metaphorical saturation of spoken religious texts (1.4 per minute of speech), but they also show that only 8% of these metaphors were unconventional and that speakers sometimes employed special means of facilitating metaphor processing. Additionally, the appearance of other markers traditionally recognised as elements of religious style (intertextual allusions, markers of higher register and other figures of speech) was only marginal. Thus, the results support the use of religious texts as the second stage in thematic development, however, with a set of recommendations.

Keywords

religious discourse, interpreting, interpreter training, metaphors

**Stylistyka tekstu religijnego
w dydaktyce tłumaczenia ustnego****Abstrakt**

Zgodnie z założeniami modelu progresji tematycznej (Janikowski 2011) teksty religijne mogą z powodzeniem być wykorzystywane na wczesnych etapach dydaktyki tłumaczenia ustnego. Niniejszy artykuł odpowiada na zastrzeżenia wobec takiego ich umiejscowienia, koncentrujące się wokół domniemanego wysokiego stopnia wyszukania stylistycznego tekstów religijnych. W pierwszej kolejności autor wypracowuje zestaw cech charakterystycznych dla dyskursu religijnego, a następnie sprawdza częstotliwość ich występowania w korpusie „okolicznościowym”. Analiza wskazuje na bardzo wysokie nasycenie metaforyczne tekstów religijnych (ok. 1,4 metafory na minutę przemówienia), ale jednocześnie na niski odsetek metafor niekonwencjonalnych (zaledwie 8%) oraz na dodatkowe rozwiązania stosowane przez mówców w celu ułatwienia przetwarzania metafor. Pozostałe tradycyjnie rozpoznawane wyznaczniki stylu religijnego (nawiązania intertekstualne, znaczniki podwyższonego rejestru oraz inne figury retoryczne) pojawiają się bardzo rzadko. Potwierdza to zasadność wykorzystywania tekstów religijnych na wczesnych etapach edukacji tłumaczeniowej z pewnymi zastrzeżeniami.

Słowa kluczowe

dyskurs religijny, tłumaczenie ustne, kształcenie tłumacza, metafora

**1. Placement of religious texts
in interpreter training programmes**

The following paper extends and further systematises previous attempts to organise interpreter training according to the the-

matic progression principle. The founding motivation of the thematic progression model, as presented elsewhere (Janikowski 2011), was to create an interpreter training framework broad enough for international application and perhaps even standardize a certain amount of curricula. The core of the thematic progression model is the progressive increase in the difficulty of the training materials (source texts for class and individual practice) postulated to occur as the class sequences through the following domains of human activity: general, religious, political, business, legal and academic. This sequence was never planned to be autonomous and self-sufficing, rather, coordination with other aspects of the learning process was highly advised (see e.g. Chmiel and Janikowski 2015, Setton and Daurant 2016 for more complete efforts at coordinating these). Yet, the simplicity of the thematic progression model hides several advantages of such ordering. One is the gradual and fluent transition from the areas students are most acquainted with to the ones most distant from their experiences, which correlates with progressively higher terminological saturation. In effect, the effort involved in classroom activities is increased in a controlled manner. On the other hand, the model assumes the use of authentic material and necessitates the use of varied materials which should increase the students' internal motivation as well as better prepare them for unstable markets. From the perspective of the teacher, the model offers an intuitive approach, relative ease of use and much needed flexibility.

However, already at the level of formulation certain reservations started emerging. One of the main concerns raised by consulted interpreter trainers was the placement of religious texts at the relatively early stage of class progression. The arguments raised revolved around the stylistic complexity and to a lesser extent lexical sophistication or informational density of such texts. If it is true that religious texts are closer to literary parlance than to ordinary speech, not only is their early placement in the progression at stake, but perhaps they should never be used as didactic materials. After all, Alexieva (1992: 221) was

sharing some common interpreter knowledge when she decried simultaneous interpreting of literary texts.

The problem is, that – as it often happens in Translation and Interpreting Studies – the reality doesn't quite fit the frame. Religious texts are interpreted and more than that, they are interpreted successfully. And even theoretically their distance from everyday parlance is not universally recognised. Huber, for instance, goes as far as to posit that the distance is nonce (2000: 33–38), at least when it comes to Christian religious texts for Christian audiences.

Obviously, Huber builds his claim around the philosophy of language and one can have linguistic reservations about his argument, especially regarding the full stylistic overlap between common language and religious language. However, the sheer spectrum of positions on the issue is interesting in its own right. Perhaps one of the answers to this puzzle lies in what particular scholars define as 'religious language'. The broader the definition, the more probable it is that the observations mostly concern written texts rather than spoken language and thus fall outside of the scope of our interest. For one, no temporal limitation on the composition makes the religious authors soar. In the written format such authors certainly are more prone to build more syntactically complex utterances, to partially limit redundancy and, with access to external resources, even to transcend the boundaries of their active lexicon. The same authors, when asked to speak, are subject to psycholinguistic limitations of speed and scope of access to lexicon, memory processes involved in maintaining cohesion and coherence or emotional involvement, to name just a few (Damian and Dumay 2007, Hagoort and Levelt 2009). A notable exception in this respect are, naturally, speeches read aloud which actually violate the orality criterion and are thus universally recognised by interpreters as one of the most challenging text types (Pöchhacker 2004: 129–130, Lenart 2006). These, however, pose the same challenges regardless of topical domain.

Yet, there is one more aspect to the definition puzzle that usually seems to be forgotten when discussing religious texts and it is the characteristics of the implied recipient. This distinction between specialist–specialist, specialist–non-specialist and non-specialist–non-specialist communication naturally applies to all spheres and domains of human activity. In the case of religious texts it (roughly) takes the forms of theologian–theologian, theologian–layperson, and layperson–layperson interaction. The distinction seems to set apart a particularly distinct type of texts produced by theologians for theologians which is barely accessible to the general public. The same opinion transpires from Huber’s considerations (2000: 34):

The words used in a Christian religious context are the same that one uses in daily speech: ‘father’, ‘grace’, ‘pardon’, etc., etc.

The specific *technical terms* of the language of faith that are used in Christian discourse are relatively rare and not indispensable, because they are explainable by means of common terms. Examples of such technical terms would be: ‘prayer’, ‘salvation’, ‘redemption’, etc. A goodly number of these terms specific to Christian discourse are of a practical and juridical nature, for example: ‘church’, ‘parish’, ‘chalice’, ‘bishop’, etc., and in a number of cases are taken from other languages, notably Latin and Greek.

Theology, on the other hand, as the reflective science of faith – or as Wittgenstein would say, the *grammar of the language of faith* – has, as does every science, a number of special terms: ‘transubstantiation’, ‘circumincession’, ‘trinitarian’, etc.

For this reason, in the original model I suggested grouping theological texts together with academic ones. Academic texts also reflect specialist–specialist communication and may possess the same features of higher lexical and informational density as well as terminological saturation. Such texts should naturally crown interpreter training. A rough criterion for the efficient separation of religious from theological texts would

thus be the level of professionalism of the recipient as well as of the speaker (cf. Lundquist 1991, Kelly 2005: 123).

These two interventions (getting rid of written and theological texts) should already clear some ground for the application of religious texts in the interpreter training programmes; yet the group that emerges as *spoken religious* (not theological) is still suspected of a high level of stylistic sophistication and merits a more in-depth analysis of its actual nature.

2. Criteria for the analysis of style in Spoken Religious Texts

Since there are no studies of features of spoken religious texts available, especially ones that would serve the purpose of elucidating difficulties for interpreting, I take as a starting point a very informative characterisation of religious discourse proposed by Wilkoń (2002: 271–272). This account of textual features of religious language is particularly suited for my purposes as it is built around a comparison with what is dubbed ‘secular’ or ‘non-religious’ (*świeckie*) texts. At least to a certain extent this is a comparison with general language which should be the starting point in interpreter training. On the other hand, it must be kept in mind that Wilkoń does not limit his considerations to spoken texts solely, so his observations will have to be filtered accordingly.

The author lists as many as 13 features that characterise religious discourse:

(1) “sacralisation of ideas effecting in imparting the sacred character to words, expressions, sentences and even complete texts” – at the level of words and expressions this results in terminology formation, at higher levels sacralisation expresses itself in intertextuality;

(2) “transcending everyday communication; hence it is not just a continuation of the common language, as is stipulated by some researchers. The spoken religious language is a cultured, literary one, respecting several norms of general Polish” – This

statement requires practical verification, especially since Wilkoń explicitly singles out the spoken language here;

(3) “semantically it is a theocratic language, after all it communicates the ‘kingdom of God’ which is not of this world. This puts it in opposition to the anthropological stance in many non-religious texts” – admittedly, the ‘theocratic semantics’ is a somewhat puzzling construct, difficult to operationalise with specific textual features. It stands to reason, however, that what is meant here is some underlying difference in cognitive framing that could perhaps result in uncommon metaphors;

(4) “meditative and prayerful character of religious language as the language of communicating with God. This communication is conducted in silence and concentration” – this feature is clearly a local one, in that it by definition dismisses the public character of texts that undergo interpretation. Apart from confessions and prayers, which are rather rarely interpreted (see Bowen and Bowen 1987) we will not observe this feature in the majority of texts used in the classroom;

(5) “tendency to perceive the world symbolically” – the more volatile and indeterminate character of a symbol as compared to a metaphor (see Cuddon 2013: 699–702) seems to present the interpreter with a smaller difficulty, because a symbol is not necessarily embedded within a particular expression and it usually requires a more narrative structure that provides more contextual clues;

(6) “metaphorical, allegorical and parabolic character of religious language that introduces an element of pathos” – metaphorically rich language is recognised as one of the basic difficulties in interpreting texts of a more ‘literary’ character (Tryuk 2007: 103) and it certainly should be tested not only in terms of relative frequency, but also metaphor conventionalisation and repetitiveness within a text;

(7) “profoundly archaic and diachronic character of religious language as well as its strong leaning towards tradition that make it somewhat akin to classicising literary styles” – the extended remark supplying the sources of inspiration quite clearly

delimits this observation to written texts. On the other hand, some archaic language has crept into contemporary use in religion and it would be very productive to see how much and how problematic it may be for students of interpreting;

(8) “an attitude of pursuing spiritual and ethical goals, the domain of truth, which results in selection of the semantic fields that refer to such values” – the orientation on the world of values is a very culturally-dependent feature in terms of its influence on interpreting difficulty. In countries where ethics and/or religious instruction have a strong hold on early education (as is certainly the case in Poland) we may expect a facilitatory role. The aforementioned semantic fields should be deeply entrenched in the minds of would-be interpreters. Needless to say, in highly secular countries the difficulties would increase;

(9) “denominational differentiation of religious language that helps keep churches and their worship styles separate, e.g. the highly ceremonial character of Orthodox language as opposed to the language used in Lutheran and Reformed churches” – although it is conceivable that some singular syntactic features can differentiate spoken religious languages of worship, I guess that this feature largely consists of terminological and, more broadly, lexical variation;

(10) “sustained relationship with canonical books, e.g. Bible, which guarantees that some texts remain almost completely unchanged” – since feature (1), “sacralisation of ideas” already extended to complete texts, tests of intertextuality should be enough to check the level of potential interpreting difficulty in this respect;

(11) “ritual character of religious language” – rituality at levels lower than the text is actually an ally of the interpreter as it increases subjective redundancy (even in written texts). To push Wilkoń’s idea a little further, the ritualization of religious language should also present itself in highly repetitive thought patterns – a true blessing for anticipatory processes in interpreting. In an even more extended form, ritualization could result in conventionalising the trajectories along which domains are mapped

in metaphorical expressions leading to the situation in which metaphors would be recognised faster (having been built according to similar patterns);

(12) “pursuit of codifying religious genres” – this feature, being an extension of the previous one but beyond the level of text, is barely translatable into practical immediate interpreting problems;

(13) “close and long-standing relationship with rhetoric, e.g. in homiletics” – should in turn result in the increase of frequency with which figures of speech (obviously, including the metaphor again) will be applied.

3. Preliminary analysis of a convenience corpus

Based on Wilkoń’s features of religious texts as presented and commented on above, for an empirical analysis of a corpus of spoken religious texts in English and Polish, I worked out the following more manageable set of features that can be envisioned as an operationalisation of the highly evasive construct ‘stylistic difficulties in spoken religious texts’:

(a) level of metaphoricity (and symbolic character) – which more or less explicitly features in Wilkoń’s points (3), (5), (6), (11), (13) and, along with theoretical accounts and external consultations with teachers of interpreting, stands out as potentially the primary marker of difficulty in processing religious style. This difficulty (obviously not in reference to religious texts, and only for sight interpreting) has recently found experimental confirmation in the studies of Zheng and Xiang (2013) or Bingham and Hao (2018).

Since the status of metaphor exceeds that of any other feature, I decided to concentrate on it the most by testing not only its frequency, but also its level of conventionalisation as already suggested in the discussion of feature (6). For the purposes of this analysis I assumed a broad, cognitively informed definition of metaphor as “the cognitive mechanism whereby one experiential domain is partially ‘mapped’, i.e. projected, onto a

different experiential domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first one" (Barcelona 2003: 3) with the proviso that being unable to track the actual cognitive mechanisms I will have to rely on their textual manifestations. In effect I will provide the measures of relative frequency of these manifestations. However, in the qualitative analysis I will attempt certain extensions in the spirit of cognitive linguistics.

When it comes to the classification of metaphors according to their conventionality I opted for a simplified three-step typology:

- conventional metaphor, e.g.: "spiritual battle", "influx of ideas", "podcinać skrzydła" (~'clip one's wings');
- metaphor with a predictable trajectory, e.g. "duchowe Westerplatte" ('spiritual Westerplatte'), "knock sin off", "korzenie, z których wyrastamy" ('the roots we grow from'). The predictability is sometimes based on the fact that within the same text the same domain (or its subdomain) has already been explored, but mostly by joining domains that are often and intuitively paired but in a novel way (cf. Johnson 1987);
- unconventional metaphor, i.e. a metaphor with an unpredictable domain mapping or one that is difficult to predict; this class also includes compound metaphors. This group contains the most creative uses of metaphorical language, e.g. "wieczernik dziejów" ('upper room of the ages'), "palimpsest dziejów" ('palimpsest of the ages'), "odsłonić profile wbudowane w architekturę świątyni ducha" ('disclose the profiles built into the architecture of the temple of the spirit').

This division is not fully in line with the more traditional approaches applied in Translation Studies (cf. Newmark 1981: 85–87), but it was modelled on them and created with the aim of simplifying the task of comparing the mental effort involved in decoding metaphors. The underlying assumption was that the difficulty increases gradually when we move from the conventional to the creative and compound metaphors. This increase is the effect of the level of acquaintance with the domains and their mappings. Alexieva suggests a similar approach but she concentrates more on the explicitness of the domains

themselves (1999: 51). At the end of the day, the ability to understand metaphors may be more subjective, relying mostly on such factors as differences in fluid and crystallised intelligence (Stamenković et al. 2019), but forming generalisations about interpreter trainee populations in this respect would require an experimental setup beyond the scope of the present considerations of this article;

(b) level of intertextuality (Wilkoń's points 1 and 10) – which is measured by how frequently references to identifiable source texts appear. These references are categorised as either overt or covert to reflect the most important difficulty in the decoding phase of interpreting, namely the identification of the allusion. The simplification in comparison with more developed categorisations of intertextuality (Majkiewicz 2008) should allow us to obtain greater clarity. Interestingly, and to further emphasise the role of metaphorical representations, cognitive processing of intertextuality has also recently been presented as cross-domain mapping (Karpenko-Seccombe 2016);

(c) archaic language and markers of higher registers (Wilkoń's points 7 and 2). These are limited to lexical items for the ease of application and follow the conclusion that Wilkoń was mostly hinting at written texts. If, however, the analysis shows a high level of saturation with archaic lexical elements, the research should be extended to marked syntax;

For ease of classification, a simple inclusion rule was created for this category. An element was classified as archaic if it was assigned such status in one of the two major dictionaries *Słownik języka polskiego PWN* and *The Oxford English Dictionary*;

(d) other figures of speech (Wilkoń's features 6, 13) mostly metonymies, but occasionally also similes, oxymorons, puns and rhymes;

(e) terminological saturation is not a feature of style, but since separation from what was described as theological discourse is important for our purposes and the analysis of the whole corpus was manual anyway, this additional feature was

included in the analysis as a simple test of the convenience corpus. It must, however, be noted that in this case the decisions were purely intuitive and based on personal experience.

The corpus itself consisted of 24 recordings with a total length of 11 hours, 6 minutes and 58 seconds. All of the texts were monologic in character and they split into the following (sub)genres of religious speech: sermon – 10 texts, topical presentation – 5 texts, presentation at a religious event – 4 texts, address by a church official – 3 texts, testimony – 2 texts. Each text was transcribed and previously used in classes of either consecutive or simultaneous interpreting. The average speed of presentation was 155 words per minute for the English speakers and 123 words per minute for the Polish speakers.

As was already signalled in the title of the current subchapter, this selection of texts must be qualified as a ‘convenience corpus’ in that it is not a random sample of religious speeches, but its creation was motivated by class needs. On the other hand, since the corpus’s emergence preceded the current study (in some cases by several years) and it reflects the multifaceted process of selecting texts for class practice described elsewhere (Janikowski 2012), there is a high probability that it managed to avoid any researcher bias which might confound the results of the current study.

The results of the quantitative analysis of the corpus are provided in the table below. Frequencies have been recalculated per minute of text for easier reference and better visualisation of potential interpreting difficulties.

The last column in the table provides an overview of the level of repeatability of the selected markers of style. It follows the standard linguistic distinction into tokens and types, wherein tokens are all of the examples of a given category to be found in the text while types only reflect the non-repeated elements (including inflected forms in Polish).

Table 1
The results of the quantitative analysis of the corpus

Category	Subcategory	Token frequency (per minute)	Type frequency (per minute)
Metaphors	conventional	0.83	0.71
	predictable trajectory	0.46	0.36
	unconventional	0.11	0.09
	total	1.40	1.16
Intertextual allusions	overt	0.21	0.17
	covert	0.02	0.02
	total	0.23	0.19
Higher register markers	archaic style	0.07	0.07
	other	0.08	0.08
	total	0.15	0.15
Other figures of speech	mostly metonymies	0.19	0.19
Terms		0.19	0.17

4. Discussion and conclusions

Limited as this study is, it still allows some conclusions to be drawn about the nature of potential difficulties in using religious texts in interpreter training and especially about metaphor use in spoken religious texts as a hindrance for the would-be interpreter.

The reliance of religious speakers on metaphors exceeded all expectations. The tabulated comparison above shows that metaphors appeared in the text more commonly than all the other features taken together. This leads to the situation in which the student–interpreter working with such texts needs to cope with a completely new metaphor in almost every minute of the source material. What makes metaphors so popular in

religious discourse? Certainly it is worth considering these results as a confirmation of the stance of cognitivists who believe that cross-domain mapping may very well be one of the most characteristic ways of representing the world. A comparative study with materials of a general or political nature would certainly dispel some doubts here. More pragmatically, the popularity of metaphorical expressions is certainly driven by the multiplicity of the roles they perform. On the one hand they make the message more attractive as is the case with “following in Christ’s footsteps”, “synowie i córki ziemi” (‘sons and daughters of the earth’), or “ogień, który wytryska” (‘the fire that gushes’), on the other, they make it more emotional as in the conventional form of address “brothers and sisters”, which activates the metaphor RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY IS FAMILY. Yet another role is facilitating communication and memorisation as in the example of “korzeń mowy” (‘root of speech’) standing for the common sources of languages.

There is a certain comfort in the statistics above. Namely, only around 30% of the metaphors are not the conventional type with the most creative metaphors appearing roughly one in every ten minutes (which means that in some texts they do not appear at all). Even if Lakoff and Turner were not right about the fully automatic processing of conventional metaphors (1989: 67–72), certainly there is a speeding-up of access to the domains accessed most commonly. Only the last category, unconventional metaphors, is going to be truly problematic for interpreters.

Yet there do appear to be certain means of facilitating the process of comprehension employed by the original speaker. They take the form of additional explanations of the target domain. In the following example:

Każdy z was, młodzi przyjaciele, znajduje też w życiu jakieś swoje ‘Westerplatte’. Jakiś wymiar zadań, który trzeba podjąć i wypełnić. Jakaś słuszna sprawę, o którą nie można nie walczyć. Jakiś obo-

wiązek, powinność, od której nie można się uchylić. Nie można 'zdezertować'.

(Each of you, my young friends, will also find in your life your own 'Westerplatte', some tasks you must undertake and complete, some good cause for which it is impossible not to fight, some duty, some obligation you cannot escape, where 'desertion' is not an option.)

the metaphor LIFE IS WESTERPLATTE was explained in detail by providing features of the target domain. This simplification is not reflected in our statistics, and yet it is not uncommon, especially for the unconventional metaphors, but it happens even for the conventional ones, if they form the core of a message. Another measure taken by speakers in such situations is coupling the metaphor with another one which has related or even the same domains. In the example above, it was visible in the mapping CONFORMISM IS DESERTION. It is not very surprising that creative speakers want to help their recipients although it certainly is a mark of well-developed speaking skills and is not a rule.

The other side of the coin, bad speaking skills, can complicate the life of the interpreter in manifold ways, however in the case of metaphors it is likely that the most problematic issues are syntactical errors accompanying the production. Such errors can render even the simplest of metaphors almost completely non-transparent as was the case in the following example:

Niech łaska Boża oparta na sile naszej wiary i umocniona jednością, jaką tworzymy wszyscy Polacy na różnych miejscach świata, niech będzie tą wspólnotą, która potrafi żyć duchem miłości.

(Let the grace of God, based on the strength of our faith and strengthened by the unity we, Poles, exhibit all over the world, let it be the community that can live in the spirit of love.)

Here the very simple metaphor NATION IS COMMUNITY turns into a structure that is very difficult to decode 'let the grace [...]

be the community', most probably because in the course of processing, the original speaker lost the source domain. Fortunately, situations as extreme as this one are very rare.

Still, recognising and understanding metaphors is not the only problem involved in interpreting them. Another difficulty lies in recognizing what technique to use in order to transport metaphors to the target language, especially under time pressure. Some theoretical solutions to this problem, albeit for written translation, are neatly outlined by Schäffner (2004). But for a future interpreter such knowledge is only the starting point. It is the task of the student, in cooperation with their tutor, to develop the sensitivity to the mechanisms in which metaphors are created across languages, to build a repertoire of conventional metaphors and to train in techniques of dealing with more complicated cases such as the one presented above. The high level of repetitiveness of mapping trajectories may lead to a certain level of 'automatisation' after some training, especially if it is conducted at relatively early stages when the remaining factors of slow pace (in simultaneous interpreting) or short batches (in consecutive interpreting) as stipulated in the thematic progression model (Janikowski 2011: 130), allow for a smaller accompanying cognitive load (cf. Setton and Dawrant 2016: 31).

To leave metaphors and move on to other stylistic features, all of the remaining criteria based on Wilkoń's suggestions pale in insignificance compared to the metaphors. Needless to say, this may be an unfortunate artefact of the convenience corpus, but it may also follow from the fact that, as was mentioned in their discussion, Wilkoń's features may, for the most part, be better suited to the characterisation of written religious texts. Further studies are needed to disentangle these effects.

The importance of intertextuality, ranking second in the frequency analysis, is undoubtedly the result of the founding character of sacred texts for the religious activities or Christian denominations. The overwhelming majority of allusions were overt and provided with a source; these were quotes varying in length (3 to 36 words) for which either the author or the specific

coordinates in the source text (usually the Bible) were given. In such cases students need to be equipped with the understanding of the importance of preparation, knowledge of interdenominational discrepancies between canonical translations and the role of a given quotation in context. This, plus practice, should allow them to decide on the application of the most efficient techniques from among on-site source text consultation, memory-based recital, or summary.

Most translations of sacred texts retain a level of archaism and pathos and thus they also contributed to the third category in my analysis. Yet, even despite this overlap, the markers of elevated register appear very rarely in the analysed texts with the average occurrence of 0.15 per minute of text. Such a tendency could be ascribed to idiolectal rather than sociolectal preferences, as all of the tokens for this category came from just eight of the 24 speeches. As a matter of fact, the tendency was rather to update the religious language, especially if the text was produced by a Protestant denomination. When it comes to archaizing it should also be remembered that interpreter trainees are usually screened for their linguistic competence. In the majority of cases, a skilled utilisation of contextual clues and a broad vocabulary span should be more than enough to deal with archaizing tendencies in the speakers, at least the ones using the student's native language. There might, however, be a pronounced imbalance when it comes to interpreting from the B or C language which requires an intervention.

Finally, the sketchy terminological analysis confirms Huber's ideas cited above even despite the fact that the inclusion in this category was set at a very low threshold of acceptance. This resulted in recognising as terms words such as "encyclical", "council" or "intelligent design", which would not meet standard terminological criteria, but may still be a source of difficulty for students.

5. Limitations and recommendations for further research

The empirical study described above is an attempt at exploring the materials at hand and is surely marked by certain methodological flaws. In further studies, the corpus should be expanded (by other speakers, texts and perhaps other languages) and randomised in terms of acquisition procedures. The analysis could be improved by introducing several judges to the classification process to avoid biases, and most importantly by a comparison with non-religious text types to see the reported frequencies in broader context. Finally, the only way to learn about actual, not potential, difficulty the religious texts cause to students is to implement an experimental paradigm that would scrutinise the effects of their classroom use.

Still, the insight the study offers in its current form is already valuable. Firstly, it shows an unexpectedly high level of metaphorical saturation of spoken religious texts, but at the same time delimits the potential destructive influence of metaphors by showing that a large proportion of these are highly conventionalised and the unconventional ones are often repeated and developed within the text to facilitate their processing. Secondly, the study suggests that the majority of features regularly recognised as markers of religious style are more applicable to written texts and feature only marginally in the spoken variety. Thus, the results support the use of religious texts as the second stage in thematic development, however, with the recommendations outlined below.

A set of separate class segments on metaphors should be organised in which students could consider the theoretical implications of metaphor structure, cultural conditioning of metaphors and the applicable interpreting techniques. Students should regularly work with prepared texts whose main difficulty would be manipulated to include metaphors, intertextual allusions, archaisms (especially in B and C languages) or markers

of higher registers. For metaphors the practical exercises could consist of:

- demetaphorising and metaphorising passages or texts,
- turning metaphors into similes,
- exploring domains by building longer and longer texts (first written, then improvised) based on one metaphorical mapping.

Some 15–20% of practical interpreting activities should preferably be devoted to religious texts of various genres and representative of various denominations, some of which should be highly dependent on intertextual use of background texts. Such class compositions combined with students' individual work should prepare them to interpret not only texts of a religious character, but also any others which are highly figurative and allusive in content.

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