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"SHOWING RESPECT" IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the way respect is shown by using 2nd person personal pronouns in languages that distinguish between you plural (you all), you honorific (polite) and you singular (familiar) forms. It discusses the likely influence of the well known Russian Synodal Translation on other translations in the former Soviet Union regarding the usage of the 2nd person personal pronouns. This article also highlights by way of comparison how Afrikaans and other Western translations use the 2nd person personal pronoun. Problems often arise when the original languages are followed too literally without taking into account the target culture, or due to the translators' perception of the social status of the engaging referents. Issues discussed and principles drawn from this study not only apply to the Russian world, but also influence all translations that have a set of 2nd person personal pronouns that distinguishes between 2nd person singular, plural and polite forms.

1. INTRODUCTION

"You can say you to him" does not make much sense. However, it could make sense in some languages that distinguish between formal and informal 2nd person personal pronouns. The quote refers to an interpreted conversation between a German- and an English-speaking person. The Germans wanted to move from a formal to an informal level of addressing each other. The interpreter was meant to say: "You (formal) can say you (informal) to him" (Ellingworth 2002:143).

Russian, Afrikaans, Dutch, German, French, Finnish, and so on distinguish between *you plural*, *you polite* and *you singular* but they do not all express respect, formality or intimacy in the same way.

When addressing God and Jesus, Russians, Germans, Finns, and so on would use the *singular intimate* form. Afrikaans and Dutch, on the other hand, would address God in a formal way, using the *polite (plural)* form.

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This article highlights the fact that there are differences in showing respect and thus in the usage of the 2nd person personal pronouns.¹ The purpose of this article is to raise awareness of this factor that prevails in many languages, and to open the topic for further discussion. It is hoped that this will have some impact on and benefit future Bible translations.

2. TERMINOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

The *terms* commonly used for referring to these two categories of politeness are also used in this article. The terms *V* and *T* are derived from the French *vous* (polite) and *tu* (familiar), respectively (Voinov 2002:210; Ellingworth 2002:143).

Data were gathered from mother tongue speakers in the former Soviet Union (or CIS) to verify the *existence* of the 2nd person pronoun in their specific languages. Fieldworkers in Russia and Central Asia provided data from mother tongue speakers (Tables 1 and 2).

Tables 3 and 4 were drafted of how these pronouns are used in the local culture, how the following people are addressed, and which level of respect is appropriate in a specific situation:²

- An adult addressing a child.
- A child addressing his/her father or mother.
- An adult addressing a leader, king or president.
- A person addressing his/her spouse.
- An employer and employee addressing each other.
- A citizen addressing the leader of the country.
- An adult addressing a teacher or a pastor.
- An adult addressing Jesus or God.

These situations were selected to gather information concerning the customs and levels of respect used in the target languages. This information will function as the criterion in evaluating translated biblical texts in which parallel situations occur.

After information from different languages was gathered, eight specific examples were chosen from newly translated Biblical Scriptures in order to find

1 Respect, or rather, the level of respect is shown not only by the pronouns used, but also in the agreeing verb forms. This issue will be discussed later.

2 The primary audience of this survey is Christian. People from other religions could use different levels of respect in addressing God, for instance.

situations in the Scriptures that could be compared to the current customs of these target languages. The following list describes each selected passage indicating the levels of respect between the speakers and the addressed.

1. Genesis 3:9 and 10: Shows different levels of respect in one conversation: God addressing man and then man addressing God.
2. Ruth 2:4: Shows different levels of respect, but examines a situation that can more easily be compared with a current one: An employer addressing his/her harvesters, and the harvesters addressing their employer.
3. Matthew 27:11: A governor and a rebellious religious leader: Jesus and Pilate addressing each other. Probably different levels of respect.
4. Matthew 8:19: Two respected teachers in a public conversation: A teacher of the Law addressing Rabbi Jesus as a respected teacher. Probably the same level of respect.
5. John 1:38: A group of followers addressing Jesus in public as Rabbi, teacher of the Word, clearly showing respect to Jesus.
6. John 3:2 and 10: A teacher of the Law addresses Jesus in private as Rabbi, and then vice versa. Probably addressing each other on the same level of respect.
7. John 13:36: One of Jesus’ closest disciples and friends addresses Him. Would he address Jesus politely or as an intimate friend?
8. Matthew 8:8: An officer speaking very respectfully to Jesus, humbling himself before Jesus, and addressing Jesus as ‘Lord’.

3. 2ND PERSON PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN RUSSIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

The Biblical source languages do not distinguish between levels of politeness in the 2nd person personal pronouns. Therefore, in most cases, the exact representation in the source language is difficult and depends on the translator’s interpretation. It is often difficult to determine the level of respect intended in the original (Chakkuvarackal 2002:71). Voinov (2002:211) referring to Tuvin, a Turkic language of Siberia, summarises the issue:

If a speaker in the New Testament uses *su* (Greek T form — RvdS), but by context is obviously showing respect to the addressee, translating with the T form into a target language which uses V forms for this purpose does not faithfully render the speaker’s attitude, and may actually distort it to mean the opposite in the unconditioned reader’s perception.

In Russian, German, Finnish, Dutch, Afrikaans, and so on the following 2nd person pronouns exist:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| you plural | universally without a distinction in level of respect |
| you formal/polite | mostly the same as the plural form but addressing one individual |
| you singular/intimate | normally the informal/intimate form between friends. |

Since languages such as German, French and the Biblical source languages might be more accessible than the languages of Russia and Central Asia, these languages are used as a control/comparison group. These will be called the non-CIS languages.³

Table 1: 2nd person pronouns in Russian, and a few non-CIS languages

| Russian and non-CIS languages | 2 nd person singular Informal | 2 nd person singular honorific | 2 nd person plural informal |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Russian | ti | Vi | Vi |
| Greek | σύ (su) | - | ὑμεῖς (humeis) |
| Hebrew | אתה את (at, ata) | - | אתם אתן (aten, atem) |
| Finnish | sinä | Te | Te |
| German | Du | Sie | Ihr |
| Afrikaans | Jy | U | julle |

Table 2: 2nd person personal pronouns in Russian and some Central Asian languages

| | You plural | V form | T form |
|--------------|---------------|--------|--------|
| Russian | vi | Vi | ti |
| Adyghe | shu | - | o |
| Azeri | siz | Siz | sen |
| Chechen | shu | - | cho |
| Kalmyk | ta | Tadn | chi |
| Karakalpapak | siz | Siz | sen |
| Kazakh | sender/sizder | Sizder | sen |
| Shughni | tama | Tama | tu |

3 The languages used in the survey from Central Asia are not related to Russian. They belong to the Turkic language family.

| | | | |
|---------|-------|---------|-----|
| Tajik | shumo | Shumo | tu |
| Tatar | sez | sez/Sez | sen |
| Turkmen | siz | Siz | sen |
| Uzbek | siz | Siz | sen |

2.1 The usage of the 2nd person personal pronouns in Russia and Central Asia

Afrikaans also distinguishes between T and V forms. Since Afrikaans addresses God using the V form it would sound extremely rude for us to refer to God with a T form even though the singular/informal pronoun is used in the source text. A translation using the T form for God will not be considered favourably. To the average Afrikaans-speaking person it would have more or less the same negative effect and disrespectful connotation as addressing the leader of the country in an informal casual way! It would not at all be acceptable.

For Finnish-speaking persons, on the other hand, not to follow the T form (similar to the source languages) will be unacceptable. To address God using the formal V pronoun will indicate to them that they are pushing God far away, and such a translation will not be acceptable to them. This is similar to the Russian usage of the 2nd person pronoun for addressing God.

When translating one must bear the following questions in mind: What is acceptable to the average reader of the translation? What is requested by the local culture in order to be as true as possible to the original intent? If this is not done, the translation may transfer the words directly, with an undesirable result.

In other words, when a translator works on a text, he will find it necessary to make certain adjustments that will cause his translation to vary in a greater or lesser degree from the form of the original. These adjustments of course are designed to make the translation communicate the message correctly (Bell 2005:70).

Referring to my examples of Afrikaans and Finnish, in order to address God in the appropriate way, one should definitely use the V form in Afrikaans and the T form in Finnish. Van der Watt (2002:252) refers to Colossians 2:8 showing that a direct word-for-word translation would be unintelligible. He disproves people:

The meaning is not the concern of the translator but of the exegete and, by implication, of the reader. The translator should simply see that the Greek words (codes) are properly presented in the English.

If the culture demands that God should be addressed by using an informal intimate pronoun, then a formal pronoun would not convey the original intention; this would antagonise the reader and have the opposite effect of what the so-called pure direct translators are seeking. Jordaan is correct in saying that the translator must translate the text so that it 'communicates approximately the same message as the original' (Jordaan 2002:25).

This issue has a twofold answer. First, how is respect shown in the local culture of the target language. A translator's knowledge of an existing locally known translation is a second factor that influences his/her choice. There is often a translation that is known by the translators and local people to use the pronouns, for instance, differently. Is the way respect is shown in these known Scriptures the same as in the target culture? For the focus of this study: How are the 2nd person pronouns used in the local culture in comparison with the Russian culture and the Russian Scriptures? The next section of this article will discuss this issue.

It is common knowledge among all Russian-speaking persons that the V form is used in all instances until such time as one is well acquainted with the other person, or is asking a favour from someone, or someone is older than oneself. The V pronoun emphasises that one has a formal relationship with the person, and that one is polite towards the other person (Dimetrieva 2003:168).⁴ At some stage the more senior person may suggest a switch to the T form for addressing each other.

Table 3 indicates how people in Russia and Central Asia use the 2nd person pronoun in addressing other people in their specific cultures. The sample consists of the following situations:

1. How would an adult address a child?
2. How would a child address his/her parents?
3. How do spouses address each other?
4. How would an employee address an employer?
5. How would an adult address the leader of the country?
6. How would an adult address a teacher or a pastor?
7. How would a believer address Jesus and God?

4 Dimetrieva, D.B. 2003. *Explanatory dictionary of the Russian language*, p. 168.

Table 3: The usage of the 2nd person pronoun in languages of Russia and Central Asia

| | Child | Parents | Spouse | Employer | President, king, leader | Pastor, teacher | Jesus, God |
|------------|----------------------------|------------------|--|----------|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Russian | T | T | T | V | V | V | T |
| Azeri | T | T | T | V | V | V | T |
| Adyghe | T | T | T | T | T | T | T |
| Chechen | T | T | T | T | T | T | T |
| Kalmyk | T | T/V ⁵ | T | V | V | V | T/V ⁶ |
| Kazakh | T | V | T | V | V | V | T |
| Karakalpak | T | V | ? | V | V | V | V |
| Tajik | T | T (V rural) | T (V rural) | V | V | V | T |
| Tatar | T | T | T | V | V | V | T |
| Turkmen | T | T | | V | V | T | T |
| Uzbek | T (V in Fergana valley) | V | T/V (depending on desire of spouse) | V | V | V | T |

Adyghe and Chechen do not distinguish between V and T forms of pronouns as a means of showing respect. They have a range of multiple respect levels and use different terms, such as sister, older sister, and so on. They only have one singular pronoun, without a distinction for politeness.

Although Turkmen distinguishes between T and V forms, a man would address a woman of all ages using the T form, but he would address a much older woman respectfully with *dayza*, an older woman *gelineje* and a younger woman *jigim*. When he uses a 2nd person pronoun to address her, he would in each instance use the same (only) singular pronoun *sen*.

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- 5 As in many societies there is a shift in the level of formality when addressing one's parents. Russians and Finns used to address parents using the V form, but they have now switched to using the T form.
- 6 According to a translator, Russian had an influence on the local language. Because most people came to know about Jesus/God through Russian, they became used to addressing God with the T pronoun in prayers. In discussing this, in the context of translation, it was thought that V would be more appropriate, but by force of habit, they insist on using T for God and Jesus. (Long 2006. Personal email.)

Tatar has a similar system for using the T form, but addresses people according to their rank or status with a term of respect while still using the T form.

An Uzbek-speaking person informed me that spouses would normally use the T form to address each other, but when one has a favour to ask, the polite pronoun is used.

The information in Table 3 is reorganised in Table 4 and grouped according to levels of respect. Languages that do not show T, V distinctions are not listed. All the V form/T form usages are grouped together. In some languages, such as Uzbek and Tajik, there are distinct regional differences in the use of the 2nd person personal pronouns.

Table 4: The usage of the 2nd person pronoun in languages of Russia and Central Asia – categorised

| | Child | Spouse | Father or mother | President, king, leader | Teacher | Pastor | Jesus, God |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Honorific Formal V pronoun | | | | Azeri | Azeri | Azeri | |
| | | | Kalmyk ⁷ | Kalmyk | Kalmyk | Kalmyk | Kalmyk |
| | | | Kazakh | Kazakh | Kazakh | Kazakh | |
| | | | Karakal-pak | Karakal-pak | Karakal-pak | Karakal-pak | Karakal-pak |
| | | Tajik ⁸ | Tajik ⁵ | Tajik | Tajik | Tajik | |
| | | | | Tatar | Tatar | Tatar | |
| | | | | Turkmen | | | |
| | | Uzbek ⁵ | | Uzbek | Uzbek | Uzbek | Uzbek |
| Regional differences | | Tajik ⁵ | Tajik ⁵ | | | | |
| | Uzbek ⁵ | | | | | | |

7 A shift is taking place. Both V and T are used.

8 In certain rural regions the people address each other much more informally than in the cities.

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--|--|--|--------------------------|
| Informal Intimate T pronoun | Azeri | Azeri | Azeri | | | | Azeri |
| | Kalmyk | Kalmyk | Kalmyk | | | | Kalmyk |
| | Karakalpak | Karakalpak | | | | | |
| | Kazakh | Kazakh | | | | | |
| | Tajik | Tajik ⁵ | Tajik ⁵ | | | | Tajik (Capitalized) |
| | Tatar | Tatar | Tatar | | | | Tatar (Capitalised) |
| | Uzbek ⁵ | Uzbek ⁵ | | | | | |
| | Russian | Russian | Russian | | | | Russian (Capitalised) |

Table 4 clearly shows that it would be culturally required for languages such as Azeri, Kazakh, Karakalpak, Tajik, Tatar, Uzbek and Russian to address God by using the V form since this form is used to address their leaders, teachers and pastors.

The available translated passages will now be discussed to indicate how the 2nd person personal pronoun referring to God and Jesus was used in the translation.

4. TRANSLATED SCRIPTURES

Biblical examples were chosen to indicate how respect is shown in each of the social situations described in the introduction. Because Russian is accessible to all language groups in Russia and Central Asia, there is a strong focus on the choices the Russian translators made, and this will be compared with other available translations. The Russian translation is more than 100 years old, and became the standard with which all translations in this area are compared. Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole (2008:257) mentioned that a similar trend is noticeable in Africa as many current translations are often simply based on other translations in the major languages of the colonial powers. Loba-Mkole (2008:257) states that in the Anglophone world, the first authoritative Bible translation based on original languages is attributed to William Tyndale (1526-34). It was superseded by the King James Version (1611), which has become the Bible for English-speaking countries for approximately 250 years.

The passages are listed in Table 5. The pronouns used in a specific situation are recorded as *V* or *T*. When referring to Jesus some translations use the

T form, but in order to give some recognition to the fact that there is a *higher level of respect* involved, they *capitalised* the T pronoun. This will be recorded in the table as *T Cap*.

Arrows are introduced in the table to show the perceived direction of the addressee's social status. An up arrow ↑ indicates that a person is addressing another person with a higher social status and that there is a greater respect and social distance from the perspective of the speaker. The down arrow ↓ indicates that the speaker does not feel the social need to address the addressee on the same or a higher level of respect. The sideways → arrows indicate that the speaker is socially equal to the addressee. This equality can be perceived as an informal or formal relationship. For example, they can address each other by using both the V form or the T form of the pronoun, depending on how intimate their relationship is (Ellingworth 2002:143). Translators may differ in some of these instances as to what kind of relationship existed in the original context.⁹ For instance, Nida (1950:44) asks the question: "Should the Pharisees and Sadducees be represented as speaking to Jesus with respect, or would they have used contemptuous traditional scholastic and social background?" and "Would Jesus have spoken to the Scribes and Pharisees with respectful forms?"

Arrows indicate direction of addressing according to social status in that context:

- ↑ Addressing someone with a higher social status.
- ↓ Addressing someone with a lower social status.
- ⇒ ↓ Addressing someone with an equal social status on an intimate T level.
- ⇒ ↑ Addressing someone with an equal social status on a formal V level.

9 Voinov 2002:211. 'It must, however, be admitted that social distinctions are not overtly marked in the Greek text everywhere. Because of this, the interpretative decision is more difficult in some cases than in others.' It is difficult to evaluate whether this should be marked as an equal relationship, or as a relationship where Jesus is regarded as a respected rabbi, teacher and leader. This is similar to the South African context where some pastors are addressed with an honorific pronoun and others with a more intimate one. In Russian society a teacher is always addressed with an honorific pronoun.

Table 5: Biblical examples — categorised

| | Address | Russian | Azeri | Kalmyk | Karakalpak | Kazakh | Tatar | Tajik | Turkmen | Uzbek | Afr |
|-------------|--|---------|---------------------|--------|-----------------------|----------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-----|
| Gen 3: 9 | God ⇩ man | T | T | T | | T | T | | | T | T |
| Gen 3: 10 | Man ⇩ God | T Cap | T | V | | T | T Cap | | | T Cap | V |
| Ruth 2:4 | Workers⇩ Employee | T | T ¹⁰ | V | | V (2:10) | T | | T(Cap) | V | V |
| Matt 8:8 | Officer⇩ Jesus | T Cap | T Cap | V | T Cap | V | T Cap | | T Cap | T Cap | V |
| Matt 8:19 | Teacher of the law ⇩⇩ Jesus, respected teacher | T Cap | T Cap | V | T Cap | V | T Cap | V | T Cap | T Cap | V |
| Matt 27: 11 | Pilate ⇩ Jesus | T Cap | T Cap | T | T | T | T Cap | V | T(Cap) | T Cap | T |
| Matt 27: 11 | Jesus ⇩⇩ Pilate | T | T ¹¹ | T | ? | V | T | T | T Cap | T | V |
| Joh 1:38 | Followers⇩ Rabbi Jesus | T Cap | T Cap | V | T Cap | V | T Cap | | T Cap | T Cap | V |
| John 3:2 | Rabbi Nicodemus ⇩⇩ Rabbi Jesus | T Cap | T Cap | V | T Cap | V | T Cap | | T Cap | T Cap | V |
| John 3:10 | Rabbi Jesus ⇩⇩ Rabbi Nicodemus | T | T (3:11) | T | T (Cap) ¹² | T | | | T(Cap) | | T |
| John 13:36 | Disciple ⇩⇩⇩ Jesus | T Cap | T Cap ¹³ | V | T Cap | V | | | T | | V |
| John 13:36 | Jesus ⇩⇩⇩ Disciple | T | T | T | T | T | | | T Cap | | T |

10 According to Azeris, there are considerable differences in showing respect between the city and the countryside. It would be unacceptable in the city to address one’s boss as T, but just as uncommon for reapers to address their boss as V.

11 Pilate addresses Jesus using the T pronoun, but it is not clear from this passage whether Jesus uses the same level of respect (T Cap) or just the T form to address Pilate. In the parallel passage in John 19:11 Jesus does not use the T Cap form.

12 It is not clear from this passage whether Jesus addresses Nicodemus with the same level of respect, because the pronoun is capitalised at the beginning of the sentence; the T form is used in both instances.

13 It is not clear from this passage whether Peter addresses Jesus with the same level of respect, because the pronoun is capitalised at the beginning of the sentence; the T form is used in both instances. In John 21:15 and Matt 17:4 Peter addresses Jesus using the T Cap.

In Gen 3:9 all the translations use the expected T pronoun when God addresses man. In verse 10 only Kalmyk and Afrikaans use the V form for man to address God. All other translators keep to the original T form, and the direct translation of the Russian Synodal Translation. In some instances such as in Russian, Kazakh and Uzbek, there was a need to show more respect and the translators decided to capitalise the T pronoun for Adam to address God. This indicates that the translators realised that they need to show more respect, but they did not want to divert from the original and/or the Russian translation.

Ruth 2:4 is the first example that can more easily be compared with a current situation. According to Table 4, all the language groups involved showed respect to their leaders, teachers and pastors by addressing them using the V form of the pronoun. (Turkmen is the only exception). In the Ruth example, Kalmyk, Kazakh, Uzbek and Afrikaans translations use the culturally expected V pronoun, whereas Russian, Azeri and Tatar use the T pronoun. Azeri speakers in the countryside have a much more informal way of addressing leaders and superiors, stating that urbanites would address their superiors with V, whereas country people would definitely use the T form.

In Matthew 8:8 Jesus is addressed as '*Lord*'. In most cultures this term would *not* be associated with the intimate and informal T pronoun. The term *Lord* is normally not on the same level of respect as the T pronoun. The *Translators handbook on the Gospel of Matthew* (Barclay & Stine 1988:233, 235) discusses the social status of this officer addressing Jesus. He is a highly regarded officer with a unit of one hundred men under him. He calls Jesus '*Lord*', which Barclay describes as a '*polite address*'. It is also mentioned that this term could be translated in different ways to make it culturally acceptable. No reference is made to the *pronoun* with which the officer should be addressed to indicate the appropriate level of respect.

Except for Kazakh and Kalmyk, all the other recorded translations in Russia and Central Asia adhere closely to the Greek (and Russian) and use the T pronoun. For showing more respect, the T pronoun is once again *capitalised* in all these instances.

In Matthew 8:19 Tajik uses the term *ustod* 'respected teacher' to address Jesus. Similarly, Uzbek uses *ustoz*. Uzbek kept to their custom of addressing Jesus using the *T Cap* pronoun, whereas Tajik made a good choice, reflecting the local cultural values, addressing Jesus using the polite V pronoun as the most appropriate pronoun in this context.

A Tajik exegetical advisor wrote:

In Matthew 8:19 we have Jesus being addressed as 'ycto' which inherently means 'respected teacher' and therefore the translator chose 'ymo' (shumo) (V form) as the most appropriate 2nd person singular pronoun

for this passage. In all interactions between *Jesus* and the *disciples* the informal 'ty' (ti) (T form) is used.

Kalmyk and Kazakh adhered to the V pronoun to address Jesus. Tables 3 and 4 indicate that in the Kalmyk and Kazakh cultures the country leader, parents and a teacher would always be addressed using the V form. The translators have endeavoured to follow the culture. The teacher of the law uses the V form to address Jesus, whom he would like to be his new leader.

In Russian as in Kazakh one would always address a teacher, or a leader using the V form, whereas Russian and Kazakh *believers* address Jesus using the T form in their prayers. Even though the Russian and Kazakh culture is normally very formal, believers are following the way Jesus is addressed in their local translations.

In Matthew 27:11 Jesus appears before Pilate. This very interesting example creates many questions of perceived or ascribed social status. Translators approached this situation differently. Nida (1950:45) warns that translators may 'interpret the system of honorifics in terms of Christian' views, and not according to the social requirements of a specific situation. In such a social setting one would expect the arrested person to use the V pronoun to address the judge or governor. The Judge can use either the V pronoun to address the arrested person, if he wanted to be formal, or the T pronoun if the arrested person comes from a low social group. Russian speakers also confirmed this.

As far as Russian, Azeri, Tatar, Turkmen and Uzbek are concerned, it seems that the Christian sentiments of the *translators* and believers who knew the Russian Bible weighed heavier than the requirements of the social context of the event itself. The T pronoun was used in both directions. This would not always be appropriate. The translators valued Jesus *higher* than the *governor* and therefore they capitalised the pronoun used by the governor to refer to *Jesus*. Tajik made Jesus address Pilate using the T form, which is not the correct choice in their culture, since they address their leaders, pastors and teachers formally using the V form, according to Table 4.

Nida (1950:45) commented by referring to a similar situation: 'Jesus would probably have replied with forms of respect to men who were socially his superiors'. Kazakh is dealing with the issue well by letting Pilate address the arrested religious leader using the T form, and Jesus addressing the governor using the V form. This is similar to the Afrikaans translation.

John 1:38 sketches the first instance of someone addressing Jesus as Rabbi or Teacher. The *Translator's handbook on the Gospel of John* (Barclay & Stine 1988:234) does not mention that certain languages would need to use a more polite form in their translations when speaking to a rabbi, pastor or teacher. In the Translator's Glossary in the *Translator's Reference Translation, The Gospel*

according to John (Carlton 2003: 264) the translators' attention is drawn to the number of the pronoun (singular, plural, dual and even triad is mentioned) as aspects of pronouns of which translators should be aware. No mention is made of *politeness* as one of the options to consider or that certain cultures require a different level of politeness than that rendered in the Greek text. As in previous examples, only Kalmyk, Kazakh and Afrikaans translations honour Jesus by using the polite V pronoun. All the other translations capitalise the T pronoun.

In John 3:10 Jesus addresses Nicodemus using the T form. If Nicodemus addressed Jesus in John 3:2 intimately using the T form, it would have been appropriate for Jesus to address Nicodemus on the same level of respect by using the T form ($\Rightarrow\Downarrow$), or he could have honoured him by using a higher level of politeness, namely V. Since Nicodemus addresses Jesus using V, the appropriate response would be to use the same pronoun. In a passage in the New Dutch Translation 2004 Jesus addresses Nicodemus using the V pronoun: *Begrijpt u dit niet,' zei Jezus, 'terwijl u een leraar van Israël bent?* Another option would be to follow in the Russian Synodal Translation's footsteps. In John 3:2 Nicodemus addresses Jesus using the T form and Jesus replies by using the T form.

In the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3:2 all the translations have once again used the T Cap. Nicodemus addresses Jesus respectfully using the T Cap or V pronoun. Only in Karakalpak and Turkmen as in Russian Jesus addresses Nicodemus with the *same level of respect*, albeit the T form. As far as Jesus' reply in John 3:10 is concerned, there are only two acceptable scenarios: addressing each other as Rabbis on the same level of respect, most probably using the polite V form, or addressing each other more intimately using the T form. It would culturally be less acceptable for Jesus to address another honoured rabbi using the T form, especially if that rabbi addressed Jesus politely using the V form, as is the case in Kalmyk, Kazakh and Afrikaans, and in principle in Azeri with the T Cap.

In John 13:36 Simon Peter addresses Jesus. All the translations, except Turkmen, give more respect to Jesus than to Peter. This is once again a very difficult situation. How intimate were Jesus and his disciples? Would they address each other on the same level of respect (both on the V-level, or both on the T-level) or would the disciples give Jesus more respect? Although a translated example of Tajik was not available, they indicated that in their translation, the public in general addresses Jesus using the V form, whereas the disciples and Jesus address each other on the same level of respect, using the T form.

It would be interesting to find another example of other NT/Rabbinic literature where a similar relationship is portrayed in order to determine how followers would have addressed their leader.

5. CONCLUSION

Throughout the Bible the Russian translation follows the singular informal pronoun of original languages to address people of all social levels. Most of the singular informal 2nd person pronouns referring to God and Jesus are translated with the T form, even though it appears that the local cultures required a different level of respect in addressing Jesus or God. The T Cap form is often used to rectify this problem to some extent. It is my opinion that even though Russian, Tatar and Uzbek capitalised the T pronoun, it set the precedent for believers to form a 'sub-culture' of politeness that differs from the general culture, because one cannot hear that those pronouns are capitalised to show more respect.

Kazakh and Tajik have moved away from the Russian translation by addressing Jesus in public situations with the formal V form even though believers address Jesus using the T form. It is clear from Table 5 that Kalmyk follows the Russian least. They are a group of people traditionally from Buddhist background who do not have such a strong legacy from the Russian translation.

Translation theories have changed over the years. The official Russian translation is a very literal translation. Translators wanted to be as 'true' to the original as possible and therefore they adhered to the T pronoun where a T form was used in the original. They felt a discrepancy between local and Biblical customs and thus they devised a method of distinguishing between a 2nd person singular *informal* form (T) and a singular *polite, formal or honorific T Cap* form when addressing Jesus.

Languages in which new translations are in progress have a very strong legacy from a well-known translation, and would not differ from the well-known translations. My recommendation would be to keep to the cultural practices as far as possible in order to convey the intended level of respect as it was observed in the original situation.

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Keywords

Bible translation

Respect

Russian

Social context

Culture

Trefwoorde

Bybelvertaling

Respek

Russies

Sosiale konteks

Kultuur