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The isiZulu translation of biblical weights and measures

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Abstract*:* Given that the metrological systems used in biblical times included concepts like our own modern-day times − i.e. weight, linear distance and volume or capacity − it is essential to explore how such concepts are translated for the modern readers of isiZulu Bibles. This article explores isiZulu translations of biblical weights and measures. It is a qualitative study that uses the textual analysis design in the descriptive translation studies paradigm. The researcher identified verses from the source texts (the Old Testament in Hebrew and New Testament in Greek) with units of weights and measures to describe how they are translated in three isiZulu Bibles. The findings are that in the 1959 and 2020 isiZulu translations loanwords are mainly used. In the 1986 New Testament version, which includes the Book of Psalms, the strategy is to translate weights and measures dynamically. The general conclusion drawn from the findings is that the use of loanwords and word-for-word translation for biblical weights and measures in isiZulu has been adopted to stay as close as possible to the words and phrasing of the source text.

Introduction

The metrological systems used in biblical times included concepts like our own modern-day times − i.e. weight, linear distance, and volume or capacity – therefore, it is essential to explore how such concepts are translated for the modern readers of isiZulu Bibles. The paucity of studies on the translation of biblical weights and measures into the languages of the world, which include isiZulu, triggered the present exploratory research project.

One of the reasons why a difference between Bible translations exists is the translation theory used by the translation team. Fuhr and Köstenberger (2016) state that when translating the Bible, the dynamic equivalence (i.e. free translation or paraphrase) or literal approaches (formal, word-by-word) can be used. The usage of the latter is an attempt to stay as close as possible to the words and phrasing of the source text. Another approach can be a certain degree of dynamic equivalence in combination with a literal approach, given that no translation can be completely literal. In the present study, two complete isiZulu Bible versions (1959 and 2020) and the 1986 New Testament version, which includes the Book of Psalms, are used to explore the translation of the biblical weights and measures into isiZulu.

The translation team of the English *New Living Translation* (NLT) (2010) took a decision to change the biblical weights and measures to modern English equivalents. However, they provided the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek (the languages of the Bible) measures, along with modern metric equivalents. By contrast, the translation team of the *English Standard Version* (ESV 2011: vii) argues that it is a '"literal" translation that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text and personal style of each Bible writer'. Though the 1959 isiZulu Bible has no preface detailing the translation theory that the translation team adopted to translate the biblical weights and measures, a term of measurement is often defined in terms of another by providing an endnote. For example, 10 *gerahs* = 1 *beka*. The 1986 isiZulu version has a short preface with no footnotes or endnotes to explain the translation of weights and measures used in the translation. By contrast, the 2020 isiZulu Bible has a preface with a comment on the biblical weights and measures, stating that the accuracy of the biblical weights and measures could not be established in the translation.

The position of the translation team of the 2020 isiZulu version seems to have been adopted because in biblical times a great variance between the different standards of measurement existed.

This is due to: 1) the different standards used from merchant to merchant, city to city, region to region, time period to time period; 2) inconsistencies and contradictions in the written records and between archaeological specimens; and 3) significant differences found between pre-exilic and post-exilic measurements in the biblical texts, which would complicate the issue when an attempt is made to merge dry capacity and liquid volume (Longman et al. 2013). Therefore, exploring the translation of the biblical weights and measures in the isiZulu Bible, particularly the 2020 version, is important because this is the latest isiZulu version, and the translators obviously have thought about modern readers.

In the history of isiZulu Bible translation, before the publication of the 2020 Bible, the only translated biblical text that applied the principles of dynamic equivalence is the 1986 New Testament and Psalms, which was published by the Bible Society of South Africa (Hermanson 1995). The 1959 isiZulu Bible was translated before Nida's (1964) development of dynamic-equivalent translation. The first complete isiZulu Bible (1893) is not considered for the present study because of its old isiZulu and orthography that may not be accessible to modern isiZulu readers. The popularity of the 1959 version is demonstrated by its use by most isiZulu-speaking people in South Africa. In response to this demand, the Bible Society of South Africa edited the text using the then new isiZulu orthography in 1997.

Literature review

Conder (1902) approaches the question of Hebrew metrology from the point of view of actual remains instead of using a theory of proportions. Though the findings of the study do not conflict with the theories of proportions, the author concludes that other proportions could be established pointing to either different ages, or to various subdivisions of the units which might have co-existed.

By contrast, Segré (1945) used a documentary analysis method to discuss units of measure used in Syria and Palestine in the period following the Greek conquest. The documents were handed down by Epiphanius. However, the author notes that the data are in most cases not reliable. For the author, the data may be accepted only if they are supported by the evidence of reliable independent sources. This entails a challenge for isiZulu translators who are expected to provide equivalents of weights and measures for the modern target readers.

This challenge is noted by Scott (1958), who argues that a problem that has vexed generations of biblical scholars is that of determining the modern equivalents of weights and measures mentioned in the Bible. Scott observes that reputable authorities provide divergent figures on biblical weights and measures, but concedes that it does not mean that the study of biblical metrology must be given up as hopeless.

In an article titled 'Weights and measures of the Bible', Scott (1959) poses questions about the height of the biblical character Goliath, the weight of his armour, the size of Solomon's temple, the meaning of the Sabbath day's journey, the meaning of the biblical acre and *pim*. Scott argues that to ask such questions shows how necessary it is to the clear understanding of the Bible to know what the biblical weights and measures meant. Indeed, modern isiZulu Bible readers should understand the meaning in their own language.

Ronen's (1996) article titled 'The enigma of the shekel weights of the Judean kingdom' highlights the difficulties of reading weights in the Bible. Ronen reminds the reader that the monetary system during the Judean kingdom was based on the silver shekel. The shekel referred not to a coin, but to a measurement of weight. Monetary transactions were made by weighing pieces of silver using the shekel weights. For lower denominations transactions, the gerah weights were used. For the isiZulu Bible translator, providing equivalents for biblical weights remains a challenge.

Kletter's paper (2014) criticises studies concerning the bath and other biblical liquid measures. They address fundamental issues of metrology by posing questions such as: Were there exact measures in antiquity? How was capacity measured? What is the difference between 'measures' and 'vessels'? Did temples employ completely different measures from those of the society as a whole? The author concludes by proposing the 'deconstruction' of the bath and other biblical liquid measures.

Tixier (2017) presents some observations on things measured in the Bible from the perspective of an engineer of both tangible and intangible objects of measurements in the Bible. Given that the

present study's focus is not addressing theological issues, what is relevant are the challenges that would be faced by translators when providing the equivalents of the weights and measures.

The studies cited in this literature review focus on the accuracy of the biblical weights and measures and their modern equivalents. None of them focuses on the translation of the biblical weights and measures into the languages of the world, which include isiZulu. This is the gap the present study aims to fill.

The approach adopted for the present study

This study adopts descriptive translation studies (DTS) as a theoretical framework. This paradigm was introduced in the early 1980s as a move away from normative and prescriptive approaches to translation. Unlike prescriptive theorists who evaluate translations as good or bad based on the concept of equivalence, the proponents of this paradigm adopt a descriptive approach towards the study of translations. They maintain that their approach is functional and target-oriented. That is, their goal is to account not only for textual strategies in the translated text, but also for the way in which the translation functions in the target cultural and literary system (Hermans 1985).

For DTS theorists, the notion of equivalence is replaced by the concept of norms as the researcher's focus of attention. Toury (1980) distinguishes between three kinds of translation norms: the initial norm, and the preliminary and operational norms. The initial norm governs the basic choice a translator makes between adherence to the source text's structure and the source culture's norms, and striving to meet the linguistic, literary and cultural norms of the prospective new readership in the target culture. Heavy leaning on the source text produces an adequate translation, and an acceptable one is the result of adhering to the norms which originate and act in the target culture itself (Toury 1980).

Preliminary norms involve factors determining the selection of texts for translation and the overall translation strategy. One of the questions a researcher should ask about these norms is 'What is the translation policy of the target culture?'. According to the UBS publishing manual, the recommendation is that, where possible, current values for all weights and measures can be used (which may exclude Ezekiel 45:10–15), with a suggestion to avoid present equivalents for all money values (Wendland 2004). The operational norms concern the actual decisions made in the translation process, i.e. additions, omissions and textual norms revealing linguistic and stylistic preferences.

Naudé and Van der Merwe (2002: 24) observe that 'the descriptive translation theorist starts with a practical examination of a corpus of texts and then seeks to determine the norms and constraints operating on these texts in a specific culture and at a specific moment in history'. However, as noted by Van den Broeck (1985), it makes sense to describe the source text in the source system first since the translation is derived from the source and not vice versa. This approach to translation is relevant for the present study because the cultural and temporal gap between the source and target text readers is vast. That is, for biblical source text readers, the Hebrew and Greek units of weights and measures are used. But the isiZulu translators choose suitable strategies to make such units accessible to the target readers at the various times when the isiZulu versions of the Bible are produced.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that uses a textual analysis design in the descriptive translation studies paradigm. In the framework of descriptive translation research, the first step is to choose an appropriate corpus of texts by considering available options for comparative analysis (Kruger and Wallmach 1997). The relevant option for the present study is the Hebrew and Greek biblical source texts and their translations in three isiZulu versions. As argued by James (1980), the basis of comparison should be determined to ensure that the researcher compares like with like. In this article, the basis of comparison is the biblical weights and measures.

The biblical verses on weights and measures are exhaustively quoted in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Longman et al. 2013). They are discussed under the following sub-themes: weights, linear measurements, land area, capacity and liquid volume. The present study focuses on the translation of biblical weights and measures under these sub-themes. The verses that are quoted in

the present study are from the biblical source texts and their translations into English: *The Hebrew-English Interlinear ESV Old Testament*, for the Old Testament (Blair 2014), and *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament*, for the New Testament (Schwandt and Collins 2011). These source texts and their English versions (English Standard Version, ESV) are used in the present study because the ESV is a literal translation of the Bible.

For the present study, observing how the weights and measures are translated in the different historical times is by comparing their translations in the 1959, 1986 and 2020 versions. Each verse, under the specific sub-theme, is read in the source text and thereafter read in the three isiZulu versions to observe how the weights and measures are translated. The three isiZulu biblical texts are abbreviated as follows: ZUL59 for the 1959 complete isiZulu version, ZUL86 for the 1986 isiZulu New Testament, which includes the Book of Psalms, and ZUL20 for the 2020 complete isiZulu version. It should be noted that in this article there is only one verse with a Hebrew or Greek measure or weight that is translated into isiZulu. I took this decision because each measure or weight has the same equivalent in the isiZulu texts or is mentioned only once in all the biblical source texts.

The preceding sections focused on the literature review, the approach adopted for the present study and the methodology used to respond to the research topic. The following section focuses on the analysis of the data.

Data analysis

The study uses the thematic analysis method to analyse the existing data: the weights and measures from the source texts and their isiZulu versions. The analysis under the sub-themes follows.

Weights

In this article the four principal units of measuring weight are considered first: *manu*/*maneh*, *shekel*, *gerah* and the *kikkar*/*talent*. Scott (1959) notes that the term 'talent' is derived from the Latin equivalent of the Greek *talanton*. The unit *manu* (about 0.56 kilograms) is translated into the three isiZulu biblical texts as follows: *manu*/*maneh* = *imane* (ZUL59: 1 Kings 10:17); *uhlamvu lwemali eyigolide* (a gold coin) (ZUL86: Luke 19:13); *imina* (ZUL20: 1 Kings 10:17). The *gerah* (about 0.56 grams) is translated as: *igera* (ZUL59: Exod. 30:13); *igera* (ZUL20: Exod. 30:13). The *shekel* (about 11 grams) is rendered as follows: *ishekeli* (ZUL59: 2 Sam. 14:26); *ishekeli* (ZUL20: 2 Sam. 14:26). The *kikkar* (about 34 kilograms) is translated as follows: *italenta* (ZUL59: Exod. 25:39); *ithalenta* (ZUL20: Exod. 25:39).

The rest of the other units of measurement are rendered as follows: (1) *beka* (about 5.6 grams) = *ibeka* (ZUL59: Exod. 38:26), *ibeka* (ZUL20: Exod. 38:26); (2) *litra* (about 340 grams) = *ilitra* (ZUL59: John 12:3); *ingxenye yamafutha* (part of the ointment) (ZUL20: John 12:3); *ingxenye yelitha yamakha* (part of a litre of ointment) (ZUL86: John 12:3); (3) *pim* (about 9.3 grams) = *ipimi* (ZUL59: 1 Sam. 13:21); *izingxenye ezimbili kwezintathu zeshekeli* (2/3 of a *shekel*) (ZUL20: 1 Sam. 13:21).

The analysis raises questions such as, 'Why is there no reference to one or some of the isiZulu versions?', 'Are the references to the biblical texts the only verses about the biblical weights and measures?'. For the first question where, for example, there are no references to the ZUL86, there are no biblical verses about that unit in this version. For the second question, as noted above, the response is that there may be other verses from other books of the Bible, but those verses provided the same isiZulu versions as those that are given in this article.

Linear measurements

The distance between the elbow and the hand or between the thumb and the little finger represented the natural and always available ways of linear measurements. However, as noted by Longman et al. (2013), the standard biblical measure of distance was the *cubit* (about 45.7 centimetres, Heb. *'ammah*, Lat. *cubitus*), which was assimilated by the later Greek metrical system. This unit of measurement is translated as follows in the three isiZulu versions: *ingalo* (arm) (ZUL59: Exod. 25:10); *ikhubhithi* (ZUL20); *ngamamitha angaba yikhulu* (for about 90 metres = 200 cubits in Greek) (ZUL86: John 21:8).

The other measures of linear distances are translated as follows in the three isiZulu versions: (1) a day's journey = *ibanga losuku* (a day's distance) (ZUL59: Num. 11:31); *ibanga losuku* (ZUL20: Num. 11:31); *usuku olulodwa* (a distance of one day) (ZUL86: Luke 2:44); (2) fingerbreadth = *uhlonze lomunwe* (thickness of a finger) (ZUL59: Jer. 52:21); (3) handbreadth (7.6 cm) = *ububanzi besandla* (handbreadth) (ZUL59: Ps. 39:5); *ububanzi besandla* (handbreadth) (ZUL86: Ps. 39:5); *ububanzi besandla* (ZUL20: Ps.39:5); (4) *million* (1 478 metres, NLT) = *imayela* (ZUL59: Matt. 5:41); *imayela* (ZUL20: Matt. 5:41); *ibanga elithile elimisiweyo* (a specific distance) (ZUL86: Matt. 5:41); (5) *fathom* (1.8 metres) = *ifatome* (ZUL59: Acts 27:280); *ifathome* (ZUL20: Acts 27:28); *amamitha okungathi angamashumi amane*) (about 40 metres, for 20 *fathoms*) (ZUL86: Acts 27:28); (6) read/rod (approximately 274 centimetres) = *uhlanga lokulinganisa* (a read for measuring) (ZUL59: Ezek. 40:3); *uhlanga lokulinganisa* (ZUL20: Ezek. 40:3); *induku yokulinganisa* (a measuring stick) (ZUL86: Rev. 11:1); (7) a Sabbath day's journey (1.2 kilometres) = *ibanga lohambo lwesabatha* (a Sabbath day's journey) (ZUL59: Acts 1:12); *ibanga lohambo lwesabatha* (a Sabbath day's journey) (ZUL20: Acts 1:12); *ibanga elingangohambo oluvunyelwe ngosuku lwesabatha* (a travelling distance allowed on the Sabbath) (ZUL86: Acts 1:12); (8) *span*, (a distance from outstretched thumb tip to little-fingertip, approximately 22.8 centimetres) = *ubude obunjengokudazuluka kweminwe* (a length from outstretched thumb tip to little-fingertip) (ZUL59: Exod. 28:16); *ubude obungangokuvuleka kwesandla* (the length of the opening of the hand) (ZUL20: Exod. 28:16); (9) *stadion* (approximately 185 metres) = *istadiyu* (ZUL59: Matt. 14: 24); *ibanga* (a distance) (ZUL20: Matt. 14:24); *ibanga elikhulu* (a long distance) (ZUL86: Matt.14:24).

Land area

In biblical times, the size of a piece of land was measured based on the seed required to plant that field or the amount of land that a pair of yoked animals could plough in one day (Longman et al. 2013). These measures are translated as follows in the isiZulu Bibles: (1) the amount of seed required to plant a field = *njengokuhlwanyelwa kwayo* (how much seed is required to plough it) (ZUL59: Lev. 27:16); *njengokukhiqiza kwayo* (according to its production) (ZUL20: Lev. 27:16); (2) *yoke* (the amount of land a pair of yoked animals could plough in one day) = i-*eka* (acre) (ZUL59: Isa. 5:10); *i-eka* (acre) (ZUL20: Isa. 5:10).

Capacity

As noted by Scott (1959), Hebrew units of capacity are related to the names and approximate capacities of utensils and the farmer's estimates of quantities such the *ephah* (a basket), the *omer* (a sheaf) and the *homer* (a donkey load). These units are rendered as follows in the selected isiZulu Bibles: (1) *ephah* (for measuring flour and grain, about 22.7 litres) = *i-efa* (ZUL59: Lev. 6:20); *i-efa* (ZUL20: Lev. 6:20); (2) *omer* (used by Israel in the measurement and collection of manna in the wilderness, about 1.9 litres) = *iyomere* (ZUL59: Exod. 16:16); *i-omeri* (ZUL20: Ezek. 45:11); (3) *homer* (for measuring dry volumes, particularly of various grains, about 183 litres) = *ihomere* (ZUL20: Isa. 5:10); *ihomere* (ZUL59: Isa. 5:10)

The rest of the measurement units of capacity (as listed by Longman et al. 2013) and their translation into the isiZulu versions are as follows: (1) *cab* (equivalent to 1 *omer*, about 1.9 litres) = *isigaxa* (lump) (ZUL59: 2 Kings 6:25); *isigaxa* (ZUL20: 2 Kings 6:25); (2) *choinix* (a Greek measurement, about 0.9 litres) = *imbenge* (small native basket of woven grass) (ZUL59: Rev. 6:6*); imbenge* (ZUL20: Rev. 6:6); *imbenge* (ZUL86: Rev. 6:6); (3) *cor* (used for the measurement of dry volumes, particularly of flour and grains, about 183 litres) = *ikhora* (ZUL59: 1 Kings 4:22); *ikhora* (ZUL20: 1Kings 4:22); (4) *koros* (a Greek measure of grain, about 360 litres) = *izilinganiso* (ZUL59: Luke 16:7); *izilinganiso* (ZUL20: Luke 16:7); *isaka* (sack) (ZUL86: Luke 16:7); (6) *saton* (the measurement of flour in Jesus' parable of the kingdom of heaven, about 6.6 litres) = *izilinganiso* (ZUL59: Matt. 13:33); *umcengezi* (broad, shallow, flat-bottomed earthen basin or bowl) (ZUL20: Matt. 13:33); *umcengezi* (ZUL86: Matt. 13:33); (8) *seah* (used to measure flour, grain, seed and other dry goods, about 6.6 litres) = *iseya* (ZUL59: 2 Kings 7:1); *iseya* (ZUL20: 2 Kings 7:1).

Liquid volume

Scott (1959) observes that the biblical standard liquid measures are the *bath* (Gk. *batos*), the *hin* and the *log*. In the isiZulu Bibles, they are translated as follows: (1) *bath* (used in the measurement of water, oil and wine, about 22.7 litres) = *ibhati* (ZUL59: 1 Kings 7:26); *ibhathi* (ZUL20: 1 Kings 7:26); (2) *hin* (used in the measurement of water, oil and wine, about 3.8 litres) = *ihini* (ZUL59: Ezek. 4:11); *ihini* (ZUL20: Ezek. 4:11); (3) *log* (used to measure oil, about 37.8 litres) = *ilogi* (ZUL59: Lev. 14:10); *ingxenye yelitha* (part of a litre) (ZUL20: Lev. 14:10).

The other measures of liquid volume, as listed by Longman et al. (2013), are translated as follows into isiZulu: (1) *batos* (a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *bath*, a measure of oil, about 30.3 litres) = *ibhati* (ZUL59: Luke 16:6); *ibhati* (ZUL20: Luke 16:6); *umphongolo* (barrel) (ZUL86: Luke 16:6); (2) *metretes* (used in the measurement of water at the wedding feast, about 37.8 litres) = *izilinganiso* (measures) (ZUL59: John 2:6); *izilinganiso* (ZUL20: John 2:6); *amalitha abalelwa ekhulwini* (about 100 litres) (ZUL86: John 2:6).

Findings

In presenting the findings of this exploration, the suggestion that current values for all weights and measures in the text can be used, where possible, as stated in the UBS publishing manual, is explored. However, it is noted that all the biblical weights and measures are approximations.

The translation of the biblical weights in the three isiZulu texts (ZUL59, ZUL86 and ZUL20) is first considered. In ZUL59, loanwords are used for all the biblical weights. By contrast, the translators of the ZUL86 (who used the dynamic equivalence method of translation) paraphrase the source text terms for their readers to make them more accessible to isiZulu readers. In the ZUL20 version, loanwords are used, just like the translators of the ZUL59 version. However, it is noted that their translation of the Hebrew term *pim*, for example, is defined in terms of another term (the *shekel*): *izingxenye ezimbili kwezintathu zeshekeli* (two thirds of a *shekel*). But the main strategy remains the usage of loanwords.

In all the three isiZulu versions, the natural ways of linear measurements are translated literally: a day's journey, fingerbreadth, handbreadth, *read/rod*, a Sabbath day's journey, span. The isiZulu version of the standardised Hebrew '*ammah* (*cubitus* in Latin) is *ingalo* (arm) in the ZUL59 Bible, a loanword in the ZUL20 version (*ikhubhithi*) and a conversion to metres in the ZUL86 Bible (which is an approximate equivalent). As for the terms *fathom* and *million*, both the ZUL59 and ZUL20 versions provide loanwords as equivalents. The ZUL86 provides a paraphrase for *million* and an equivalent in metres for *fathom*. The ZUL59's equivalent of *stadion* is a loanword *(istadiyu)* and both the ZUL86 and ZUL20 paraphrase the term. The ZUL86's translators' attempt to use the metric system to make the text accessible to modern readers should be noted.

The measures of lands and fields are applicable to the ZUL59 and the ZUL20, that is, to the Old Testament only. The equivalents of the use of seed to measure lands or fields are paraphrases in these two isiZulu Bibles. However, the translators of both the ZUL59 and ZUL20 use *acre* for *yoke*.

As for capacity, the terms *ephah*, *omer*, *homer*, *cab*, *cor* and *seah* are applicable only to the ZUL59 and ZUL20 versions. All of them, except *cab*, are translated by using loanwords. The word *isigaxa* (lump) is provided as an equivalent of *cab* in the two Bibles. The general word 'measures' is provided as the equivalent of the word *koros* in the ZUL59 and ZUL20 versions. The ZUL86 uses the word *isaka* (bag) for this Greek term. For the term *saton*, the ZUL59 uses the general word *izilinganiso* (measures). Both the ZUL86 and ZUL20 use the cultural word *umcengezi* (broad, shallow, flat-bottomed earthen basin or bowl) for this term.

The biblical terms *bath*, *hin* and *log* for measuring liquid volume are not relevant for the ZUL86 translation. The isiZulu equivalents of the terms *bath* and *hin* are loanwords in the ZUL59 and the ZUL20 Bibles. As for the term *log*, the ZUL59 uses a loanword and the ZUL20 defines it in terms of a litre. The equivalent of the Greek term *batos* is a loanword in both the ZUL59 and ZUL20 versions. The ZUL86 uses *umphongolo* (barrel) for this term. The equivalent of the term *metretes* is *izilinganiso* (measures) in both the ZUL59 and ZUL20 Bibles. The ZUL86 defines the term in relation to litres.

Discussion

The main challenge faced by the isiZulu translators of the Bible is how to deal with the cultural and temporal gap between the readers of the source texts and the isiZulu target recipients. In other words, how to make the biblical weights and measures accessible to the target readers in the different historical times of production of the isiZulu versions. Furthermore, the translators should consider providing accurate isiZulu equivalents of the weights and measurements, which is a challenge because of the variance between the standard of measurements that existed during biblical times.

The study found that both the ZUL59 and ZUL20 use loanwords as equivalents of the biblical weights, while the ZUL86 prefers paraphrases for the terms. The translators of the three biblical texts literally translate the natural ways of linear measurements, and the standardised biblical linear measures have loanwords for both the ZUL59 and the ZUL20 versions. The ZUL86 tries to use the metric system. As for the measurement of land or fields, both the ZUL59 and ZUL2020 versions use paraphrases for the use of seed or yoke (which is applicable to the Old Testament). The ZUL59 and ZUL20 use loanwords for biblical terms of capacity. The heavy leaning on the source text, as demonstrated by the ZUL59 and ZUL59 translators, entails their commitment to producing adequate translations. By contrast, by using dynamic equivalence as a method of translation, the ZUL86 translators' purpose is to produce an acceptable translation.

Given that an attempt to provide exact equivalents of the biblical weights and measures in any language results in approximations, the isiZulu translators have taken a decision to resolve the issue. The operational norms that govern the decisions taken by the isiZulu translators appear to have been uncovered in the three isiZulu Bible versions. Scott's (1959) position that biblical metrology is far from being an exact science is confirmed in the present study, as the isiZulu translators faced a challenge in their translation of the biblical weights and measures.

The different strategies used by the isiZulu translators in the three different historical moments suggest that there will be different strategies in translating the biblical weights and measures in future, even in other languages of the world. This is demonstrated by the translators of the English NLT version who translated the weights and measures dynamically, though they also provide the literal versions. The ZUL20 translators seem to have resolved that the dynamic equivalence method used by the ZUL86 translators could not provide the accurate translations of the source text weights and measures.

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