[Article] Toward Greater Emotional Accuracy in Psalm Translation: A Focus on the Process of Internalization

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June F. Dickie's passion is helping others understand the richness and beauty of the Psalms (and their ministry in our lives) and being able to share them in song. Dickie began working in this direction in 2015, with Zulu youth, obtaining a PhD (thus having begun to study the theoretical support for the methodology that has been extended and refined by the Psalms that Sing team, of which Dickie is a part). This paper shares some of the group's learnings the past three years.

1. Positioning of This Paper in the Current BT Context

I write this paper in response to many requests[1] from Bible translation groups with regard to how to internalize poetry, within the oral ambience of oral Bible translation (OBT). Clearly some facets of poetry differ from narrative (the genre of most OBT). For example, a poem, unlike a narrative, must be heard many times *in its entirety* before it can be understood. People have approached our group because, for several years, we have been together seeking to develop a new method for translating psalms in a way that is sensitive to local culture and within an ethnic musical milieu. We have now reached a stage at which we have something to share that could benefit others. In particular, we have noted three areas which are important if translators are to be able to express the message of a poem: first, they need to enter into its emotional content. Second, they need to hold its content as a *whole* (since a poem must be understood as a unit). And third, they need to engage creatively, using all the senses to explore the full rhetoric of the poet. This requires an application of the dynamics of performance (for the first), memory theory (for the second), and methods of stimulating creativity (for the third).

The research aspect of this paper involves *applying insights* from other disciplines to Bible translation. Many scholars (for example, Aboelela et al. 2007[2]) would assert that this is where exciting discoveries are currently being made, at the intersection of related disciplines. Thus, in this paper I focus on the application of findings from related fields (memory studies, creativity studies, and performance studies) rather than critically assessing those findings. I present those findings which have been tested in practice and found to be helpful when translating psalms. Most Bible translators have neither the time nor the opportunity for such focused study, and I offer this paper to help them.

The nature of this paper is practical. The research question is simple: How can we translate psalms in a more culturally sensitive way, including the poetic features of the RL and the community's musical and performance modes? The method comes from twenty weeks of workshops with three language groups of three African countries. By sharing proven ideas, the paper offers an innovative, creative, and stimulating approach to psalm translation.

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[1] These requests were addressed to Sebastian Floor (Seed Company), coordinator of the *Psalms That Sing* group. I'm a member of this group and have been involved in psalm research for the past nine years. The *Psalms That Sing* group, comprising five OT consultants (and others assisting in various ways), each of the five with over thirty years of experience in BT. For further information, see https://www.psalmsthatsing.org/.

[2] There is a growing understanding that research should "combine the skills and perspectives of multiple disciplines" (Aboelela et al. 2007, 329).

2. Introduction

The translation of psalms receives significant interest across the world in communities that have a New Testament and in others that have no Scripture but would like translations of the book of Psalms in their languages. There is also an increasing focus on orality in the translation of biblical texts, as well as a growing understanding of the value of performance in both exegetical understanding of a text and in communicating the message of the text. These three driving forces are integral to an approach currently being researched, which this paper describes.

First, section 3 gives attention to the role of creativity in translating a poem. Research from various scholars suggests the value of both working alone and in groups to stimulate creativity. One aspect that shows the need for creative thinking in translation is in the choice of meaningful metaphors.[3]

Section 4 looks at some important principles when translating poetry rather than narrative. The focus on sound patterns in poetry and the emotional core of a poem are considered, along with a description of prosodic elements that play a part in conveying emotion.

Oral translation always involves a need to remember the key ideas of the text, but the approach used to "internalize" a poem differs in some ways from that of a narrative. Thus, section 5 addresses the matter of internalizing a poem, from a theoretical basis, including a review of some mnemonic devices apparent in poetry. Section 6 introduces exercises which seek to provide "memory hooks" based on different senses—for example, pictures, body actions, rhythms, and others. Section 7 gives some examples of applying these practical helps to three psalms of different genres.

Section 8 reviews the notion of "accuracy" when it comes to poetry translation and applies these principles to assess some translated psalms. Finally, Section 9 concludes with some thoughts on how translation teams can apply some of the ideas this paper suggests.

3. The Role of Creativity in Translating a Poem

Engaging in a creative process first requires the generation of as many ideas as possible ("green-lighting"). These ideas then need to be evaluated, with the best ideas selected for use (Ritter and Mostert 2018). Often, sharing ideas in a group can be most productive for generating ideas. One person's contribution triggers ideas for another, through association and categorization (Nijstad et al. 2002; Kohn et al. 2011; Deuja et al. 2014), resulting in more possibilities. However, individual thinking can also be productive, as it allows a person time to process their idea without other people's sharing interrupting their thinking (Ritter and Rietzschel 2017, 112). Thus, most theorists of creativity (Ritter and Mostert 2018, 263–264) suggest a hybrid process, with participants first thinking alone and then sharing in groups (or vice versa).

One area in which creativity is needed when translating a poem is to find the meaningful metaphors of a culture and community. The original metaphors need to be examined for understanding and then for relevance. Where necessary (if the original metaphor is meaningless and not one repeated throughout the biblical text), the community should seek a local metaphor that powerfully communicates the original meaning.

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[3] Translation consultants differ about how much freedom is permissible when translating metaphors. Some consultants require that metaphors be retained if it is to be classed as a "translation." Changing the metaphor, some consultants say, results in an "interpretation" or an "expression inspired by the biblical text."

4. Features of Poetry Which Impact Translation

Poems convey both cognitive and emotional content, and both must be translated if listeners are to respond to the full aesthetic beauty and rhetorical power of the psalm. In brief, a poem differs from other genres of literature in its focus on sounds as well as words; together, the sounds and words are carefully positioned to convey emotion from the poet and to evoke emotion in the listener.

4.1 Poems Give Focus to Words and Sounds

Poems give attention to ideas (the semantic content), sounds, and the rhetorical impact. Typically, poems include a variety of poetic devices that extend the semantic content (such as metaphors) or that evoke emotions through adjusting the sound patterns (such as meter, rhythm, and rhyme).

When listening to language, people quickly overlook the syntax (Sloboda 1985). Through the careful choice of emotively charged words, their arrangement, and the sound patterns which emerge from the prosody,[4] however, a poem's text can become more memorable. This will help arrest the normal rapid decline in memory which usually occurs, with detail being forgotten (Tillmann and Dowling 2007).

Further, poems (like music) usually exist "for us to enjoy and to reflect on" (Djikic and Oatley 2014). Integral to enjoying poems is that they "move" (the emotions) of the audience. The poet does so not only through the poem's content but also by using prosodic features (such as rhythm, meter, and rhyme) which amplify the emotions evoked by the poem's contents (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022, 2). This is particularly the case with regard to the basic emotions of happiness, sadness, anger, or anxiety.

Edgar Allan Poe paid great attention to the quality of sounds in order to influence the emotions of the listener. According to Cynthia Whissell (2011), "Poe successfully manipulated sounds in his poems in order to produce what he considered appropriate emotions in his audience" (155). For Poe, effect and affect[5] were more important in a poem than cognition (Whissell 2011, 150). Poe referred to the importance of sonority and liquidity of sounds, and to the poetic character of vowels in contrast to consonants. Another poet who gave significant attention to sounds was Alexander Pope. He asserted that "the sound must seem an echo to the sense," and, according to Whissell (2004), this was apparent in his translation of the *Iliad*.

Reuven Tsur (1992) has focused his scholarly research on the impressionistic use of sound and emotion in poetry. He discusses several sources of the effects of different sounds—for example, the place of articulation (front versus back), and tension in the vocal apparatus during sound production. Whissell (2000) also examines the emotions conveyed by sounds in poetry, using a theory of phono-emotionality which ties the natural emotional meanings of sounds to the characteristics of the sound signal (sonority and liquidity, for example) and to the muscular effort and facial expression involved in sound articulation.[6] Phonemes are categorized in terms of eight

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[4] The basic elements of prosody are rhythm, meter, and rhyme. Some people would add stress and tone.

[5] *Effect* refers to the result or impact of the poem on the hearer or reader (visible or not), whereas *affect* is the outward expression of feelings and emotion.

[6] For example, the enunciation of the "o" sound in *alone* produces the elongated cheeks and dropped jaw characteristic of sadness while the enunciation of the "long e" in *cheese* raises the lip-corners and mimics a smile. Phono-emotionally, "o" is classified as a sad sound, while "long e" is classified as cheerful. These effects are culturally and linguistically specific.

emotional tones.[7] Using this analysis, we find in Poe's poetry a preponderance of sounds that are emotionally both sweet and sad.

4.2 Poems Convey and Evoke Emotion

Most scholars accept that poems provoke real emotions in the recipient (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022). Some scholars (Hanslick 1957) claim that aesthetic reactions are intellectual, not emotional. Others (Walton 1990) argue that poems cannot evoke real emotions. Some argue that "aesthetic emotions" are simple hedonistic emotions of pleasure or displeasure (Skov and Nadal 2020), but most theories of aesthetics reject such skepticism. The notion that poems can simulate emotions provides a psychological underpinning for cognitive poetics (Stockwell 2019). It is compatible with several investigations of the brain circuits underlying the experience of poetry in neuro-aesthetic theories (Jacobs 2015; Koelsch et al. 2015).

In addition to its content, another important way that poems evoke emotions when articulated orally is through the use of prosody. These elements have been shown to inspire basic emotions (Kraxenberger et al. 2018), as I describe in the next section.

4.3 The Use of Prosody

When translating a psalm, the translator must bear in mind prosodic elements in the receptor language which will convey some of the meaning—for example, to enhance or evoke the four basic emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, and anxiety. The basic prosodic elements (rhythm, meter, rhyme, stress, tone) work together (Ramdinmawii et al. 2017). One way in which these prosodic elements evoke emotions is through conveying a sense of the speed of actions and thoughts (Pronin et al. 2008). People who are happy tend to move and think at a medium pace; those who are sad tend to do so slowly. Thus, the speed of speech can evoke the corresponding emotion. If the contents of the poem trigger a basic emotion but prosody evokes a different emotion, the result will be mixed feelings, which might imply that the poem has failed (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022, 8–9).

In particular, the translator must be mindful of the following features of prosody:

4.3.1 Rhythm

We can define rhythm as "the systematic arrangement of (musical) sounds, principally according to duration and periodical stress" (Oxford Languages[8]). However, this need not imply periodicity (based on timing or duration) as the *pattern* of stresses is more important (Suppes 2009, 161; Arvaniti 2009, 61). Any line of verse has a regular or irregular rhythm. Regularity characterizes happiness and sadness, whereas irregularity characterizes anger and anxiety.[9]

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[7] These are: Pleasant, Sad, Soft, Passive, Cheerful, Unpleasant, Active, and Nasty.

[8] https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/

[9] Unfortunately, written poems are not able to indicate prosody, making it difficult for the reader to distinguish between anxiety and anger. However, even music has difficulty in distinguishing the two (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022, 7).

4.3.2 Meter

Meter is the rhythm of a piece of poetry and is based on the number of lines in a verse (Fabb and Halle 2008). The use of regular meter draws attention to the words in a poem and facilitates easier communication. It also heightens the emotional impact (making the poem more memorable) in the following ways:

a) Meter imposes constraints on poets, thus enhancing creativity (Haught 2015).
b) Meter introduces *redundancy* into verse, making the poem more predictable and easier to remember.
c) Meter has an emotional impact, exciting the listener and preparing her to listen readily to what is being said (Auden 1977, 307).
d) Meter helps hearers perceive poems as more likeable and intense (Obermeier et al. 2016).

Meter can be relatively fast or relatively slow. An upbeat meter may evoke happiness or, depending on the contents of the verse, anger or anxiety. In contrast, a slower meter tends to evoke sadness (Eliot 1932). The deliberate violation of an established meter results in an irregular rhythm that implies a disturbance in the state of mind, such as a feeling of anger or anxiety (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022, 8).

4.3.3 Rhyme

Rhyme in poetry is the repetition of final syllables, typically at the end of a line. It can convey differing emotions depending on the temporal intervals between rhyming elements. (This is because the temporal intervals between rhymes cues the speed of action and thought.) If the rhyme is between adjacent lines or words, as in alliteration and assonance, then the poem conveys a relatively upbeat tempo, which evokes happiness—or, depending on the poem's contents, anger or anxiety. A longer interval between rhymes elicits slowness and evokes sadness.

4.3.4 Stress

Stress (on a particular syllable) is often not consciously perceived (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022, 5), though it helps to identify words (Rothermich et al. 2012) and thus facilitates ease of comprehension (Cutler and Foss 1977). Johnson-Laird and Oatley (2022, 5) argue that stress depends not on the *volume* of the stressed syllable but on the *pitch* of the syllable's vowel (the pitch being raised to stress a syllable). However, Li and Meng (2016, 5) claim that stressed syllables usually exhibit both greater loudness and higher pitch (as well as longer duration), and thus the determining factors may be indistinguishable.

Languages vary in their stress patterns. In spontaneous spoken English, for example, stresses tend to come at regular intervals, at the onset of the vowel in the stressed syllable (Allen 1975). Each line has a given number of stresses. In other languages (such as French or Italian), syllables (rather than stresses) tend to come at regular intervals, and each line has a given number of syllables (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2022, 5–6).

The number of stressed syllables in a line impacts the speed of delivery and thus the emotion conveyed. A density of stressed syllables slows a poem, whereas a line which is less dense with stresses is pronounced more quickly. Thus, a three-syllable word with two unstressed syllables tends to elicit "happiness," while the meter of a two-syllable word with two stresses tends to elicit "sadness" (Tedford and Synnott, 1972).

Another variation linked to stress refers to the pitch of the first formant in vowels. This may indicate the speaker's emotional state; angry or anxious people tend to speak with a rise in pitch (giving greater emphasis), and sad people speak with a lower pitch. Negative emotions (sadness, anger, and anxiety) can therefore be

communicated via the voice quality, when the content gives little indication of the emotion (Ramdinmawii et al. 2017).

5. The Need to Internalize a Poem before Translating It

5.1 What Is Internalization?

In psychology and sociology, internalization involves the integration of attitudes, values, standards, and the opinions of others into one's own identity or sense of self. In our context of translating a poem, our goal is to help translators "make the poem their own," in the sense of giving the poem's main message, themes, and use of poetic devices in a way that is personal (meaningful to the individual). If translators have achieved this level of internalization, then what they communicate (through their thinking, words, gestures, and prosody) will be natural. There may be some detail missing, but this can be corrected without losing the essential aspect of naturalness and cultural sensitivity.

5.2 Internalization in Contrast to Memorization

Internalizing a poem is not the same as rote learning or memorization. Rather, it is "an intellectual exercise that illuminates the structure and logic of the text" (Alfano 2019). Memorization has value in terms of slowly understanding a poem better, as long as it is not done in a mindless way. In contrast, internalization seeks to understand the content of the poem in the light of its historical context, considers the structure and logic of the poem, and gives attention to patterns of sound and poetic features which make the poem persuasive, memorable, and enjoyable. Thus, unlike memorization, it is a process which stimulates creativity and analytical thought.

The result of internalization is that the person can give a version of the poem with all the important features, even if not using the same words as in the poem. It should sound as if the person herself is talking. Once she has internalized the poem, she is able to convey, using her own voice (literally and figuratively) an articulation of the poet's thoughts and feelings.

5.3 Insights from Literature Concerning Internalization

a) Actions can help a person remember material (Craik 2021). Thus, gestures and miming the action are all beneficial, as is jotting down key words (Smirnov 1973, 89). Participants should also explain to one another (in small groups afterwards) what they were doing and feeling.

b) Experiencing in one's body the emotions represented in each stanza[10] and showing that emotion in the facial expression also assist with memory (Laird et al. 1982, 654–655), strengthening physiological (or associative) memory (Pullinger and Whitley 2016, 12, 18). Further, expressing emotion is associated with creative cognition[11] and artistic performance (Beaty et al. 2016). Participants should therefore try to compose an "emotional map" of the poem—that is, acting out the emotions (without using words). Holding this in memory helps the participants focus on the mood changes of the poet as the poem proceeds.

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[10] Segmentation of the psalm into stanzas would have been covered during the "big picture" oral discussion prior to internalization. The leader may invite people to suggest the segments they hear, but usually the segmentation is part of the leader's teaching, displayed on a screen for clarification of why the text is segmented as it is.

[11] "Creative cognition" is a set of mental processes that support the generation of novel and useful ideas.

c) The more senses that are activated by an experience, the better one will remember it. Thus, it is helpful to try to associate smells, tastes, textures, as well as pictures and sounds with the "ideas" in each stanza being memorized (Lapp, cited in Ehrenburg 1995).

d) Personal connection amplifies memory, and so participants should be encouraged to discuss the "key idea" in each stanza and why it is important to them, with examples if possible.

e) Listening to music (even passively) activates many psychological functions, including emotion regulation, memory, attention, and imagery (Jäncke 2008). Therefore, it can be helpful to convert key ideas into a song or a chant.

f) The ancient Greek and Roman rhetoricians observed the human propensity to remember in relation to place or space, and they developed the memory aid of associating the themes of oral discourse with various "rooms" (Cicero, *De Oratore* 2.86[12]). In the seventeenth century, philosophers shifted from visual to linguistic memory aids (semantic and logical). These ideas can be combined and adapted to have "spaces" holding a different prop (an object, picture, or gesture that has a logical relation to the key idea), and people can move from one space to the next, recalling the different ideas associated with the props (see section 6.8.).

5.4 "Body Memory"

Apart from processes happening in the brain (to store a memory), body memory is also worth considering. Researchers have identified specific movements that correlate with what we recall and how we feel. In some cultures, light movements and open body positions (for example, palms upward while a person sits in a resting position; Koch et al. 2014, 280–281), maintaining an upright posture (Riskind 1984) and nodding one's head (Foerster and Strack 1996) are associated with positive feelings, whereas strong movements or closed body positions (a clenched fist), a slumped posture, and shaking one's head recall negative emotions. Also, for some communities, actions toward the body have positive associations, and those away from the body have a negative emotion associated with them (Koch et al. 2014, 272–273). Participants will use the body actions that they find meaningful, but by physically enacting such emotions, they will extend their capacity to remember those emotions. This is based on the finding that memories are "easier to access if the body position is similar to the one in the original experience" (Dijkstra et al. 2007, 146).

5.5 Features of a Poem That Help with Remembering It[13]

Mnemonic devices include those pertaining to words and those related to structural features. Both are based on repetition—repetition of sounds, words, or ideas (similar or contrasting ideas). For example, assonance, alliteration, wordplay, and rhyme all involve a repetition of sounds. Inclusion and chiastic structures have repetition of words or ideas in different patterns. All these poetic devices assist with remembering the text. Some examples of mnemonic devices in psalms are given next.

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[12] Cited by Duling 2011, 2.

[13] Internalization is the third step (in a ten-step process) in our methodology of translating a psalm. During the second step, the "big picture" of the psalm is discussed orally, including the main theme, discourse structure, segmentation, and so forth. This article focuses on the third step, internalization. For a fuller discussion of the ten steps, see https://www.psalmsthatsing.org/.

5.5.1 Psalm 3[14]

1 YHWH, how-have-become-**many**.they (are) my.foes!
Many are.rising against.me;
2 **many** are.saying to.my.soul,
"There.is.not salvation
for.him with.ELOHIM." Selah
3 But.you, YHWH, (are) a.shield around.me,
my.glory, and.the.lifter of.my head.
4 (With) my.voice to.YHWH I.cried,
and.he.answered.me from.hill of.his.holiness. Selah
5 I lay.down and.I.slept; I .awoke. (again),
for YHWH sustained. me.
6 I.will.not.fear of.**multitudes** of.people
who all around have been.set against.me.
7 Arise, YHWH!
Save.me, my.ELOHIM!
For-you.have.struck all.my.enemies (on).cheek;
the.teeth of.the.wicked you have.broken.
8 To.YHWH (belongs) salvation;
on.your.people (is) your. blessing! Selah.

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[14] See also Dickie 2023; Dickie 2022, 18–19; Dickie 2020, 8–11.

The repetitions of *many*, *YHWH*, and *save* (in different forms) are clear in the table above. As a whole, the psalm has an inclusio (YHWH in vv. 1, 8). There is also a chiasm in v. 7 (*struck; enemies; cheek; teeth; wicked; broken*), implying completeness of Yahweh's action (defeating the enemy).

5.5.2 Psalm 93

Psalm 93 has a frame formed by an inclusio in vv. 1–2 and v. 5 (with all these verses giving the idea of "being reliable, unchanging, forever") and a chorus of two verses in the middle. Both of these middle verses have a totally different form to the other verses, each consisting of a tricola with increasing emotional intensity.

v. 3　*The waves have lifted up,*
　　　the waves have lifted up their voice,
　　　　the waves have lifted up their voice on high!

Verse 4 is similar, ending with the repeated word *mighty*. The repetition of language in both of these verses, as well as their strong rhetorical power, makes them memorable (and singable!).

5.5.3 Psalm 133

Psalm 133 has only three verses, with a strong link between the first and the last and two colorful metaphors in the middle. The table below shows repetition of *good* and *coming/running down*.

הִנֵּה מַה־טּוֹב וּמַה־נָּעִים	1 Behold, how-**good** and-how-pleasant
שֶׁבֶת אַחִים גַּם־יָחַד:	dwelling brothers even-together!
כַּשֶּׁמֶן הַטּוֹב עַל־הָרֹאשׁ	2 (It is).like.the.oil the.**good** on-the.head,
יֹרֵד עַל־הַזָּקָן זְקַן־אַהֲרֹן	running down.on-the.beard, (on) the.beard-of.Aaron,
שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל־פִּי מִדּוֹתָיו:	which.is.running down.on-the.collar of.his.robes!
כְּטַל־חֶרְמוֹן	3 (It is)like.the.dew-of. Hermon,
שֶׁיֹּרֵד עַל־הַרְרֵי צִיּוֹן	which.is.coming.down on-the.mountains of. Zion!
כִּי שָׁם צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה	for there commanded YHWH the.blessing:
חַיִּים עַד־הָעוֹלָם:	life until-forever.

6. Practical Ways to Help Internalize a Poem

We have found the following exercises helpful in internalizing a psalm and experiencing its emotions.

6. 1 Reading the Poem Aloud

The first step in engaging with a poem is to read it aloud, several times (in various languages and translations, as appropriate). This enables it to become embodied, particularly if the reader pays attention to prosody (especially intonation, pauses, and rhythm).

6.2 Performing the Poem

Performing the poem (particularly without the distraction of written text) facilitates its being "incorporated more thoroughly into mental life" (Alfano 2019). It is helpful to adjust the text to look like a play script, which participants can use initially to keep them fairly close to the poem. But after a few times of following the written script, participants should enact the poem using their own words.

6.2.1 Enacting the Backstory to a Psalm

The historical context of a psalm is not always clear; as Bail (2012) notes, "Psalms are poetic texts, and it is impossible to make linear connections from such texts back to the situation that gave rise to them" (248). However, the superscriptions do help us understand the way the psalms were historically interpreted. For example, scholars usually point to 2 Samuel 13–15 and 17–18 as the possible background for Psalm 3. To understand David's situation at the time of composing Psalm 3, we must consider a wider context: his disobedience (2 Sam 5:13, cf. Deut 17:14–17), the covenant God made with David (2 Sam 7), and God's response to David's disobedience (2 Sam 12:10–11).

To help participants understand that though David had received a promise from God, his disobedience meant that he would suffer family troubles (and Absalom's rebellion was part of that consequence), a few short dramas could be enacted. The first would involve a narrator giving a resume of the covenant God made with David, but his disobedience being the cause of family troubles. Then a small drama would enact 2 Samuel 15:13–16, with David on stage with his servants and, to the side, Absalom with his followers. This provides a clear idea of David's emotional state when he composed Psalm 3.

6.2.2 Enacting a Psalm or Its Part

With some psalms, it may be possible to enact parts of the text to help participants enter into the emotions of the poet. As noted, Psalm 93 has the main message carried in the middle two tricola (vv. 3–4), with vv. 1–2 and 5 forming an inclusio frame around this central passage. Verse 3 has a growing cry about waves about to crash over the psalmist. To help participants engage with the emotion of fear, and to stimulate the natural language one uses in such a situation, participants can enact a drama in which they are in "small boats" (perhaps formed from chairs) on a choppy sea. Some people can enact the wind blowing (waving a sheet, for example), and others can be the waves breaking over the boats. Then those in the boats try to enter bodily into the situation, "feeling" the associated fear, and imagine what they would cry out in such a situation of panic.

An extension of this exercise is to consider the kind of person we would want to help us in such a crisis. I formulated an acronym BEST, which helps participants remember the rest of the psalm: someone who was the **B**oss (= authority), **E**xperienced, **S**trong, and **T**rustworthy. Only after we had enacted this middle verse did we read the

whole poem aloud and look for the BEST qualities in the other verses.[15] We also thought about the rope that the "person who would save us" would throw us; it would need to be well-secured (not moving, that is, "established," as in v. 1c–d). This exercise tries to help participants imagine a fearful situation and then call out words of help (considering "What words?" and "Whom is the cry addressed to?"). The use of an acronym is introduced as a memory device to help participants remember the other key ideas in the psalm.

In other psalms, one may enact just an attribute, such as arrogance or humility (as in Ps 131:1). Participants can be asked to walk like such a person or display on their face and in their gestures such an attitude, or enact a situation where a person demonstrates such an attribute. The important consideration is to try and help the translators feel what seems to be the emotion underlying the poet's words (the choice of metaphors, the poet's focus as seen in the accumulation of poetic features, the repetitions, and more). If the translator can enter *in* (hence *in*ternalization) to *the psalmist's* emotional being, then the translation is more likely to carry the same emotional thrust as the original.

To that end, the performers should be sensitive to their use of prosody. They should seek to use stress carefully, taking note of whether the psalm's rhythm is regular or if there is a change, with one line being given particular focus. They should also make sure the word repetitions which appear in the psalm are used in their performance.

Along with prosodic elements, gestures can also play a large role in communicating the message of the poem, and particularly the emotions underlying the content. Whereas the words give the content of the poem (which could be likened to the scene in a painting), gestures and prosody indicate its style, form, and brushstrokes (Johnson-Laird and Oatley 2021).

6.3 Creating an Emotional Map

An emotional map of a psalm can be helpful, particularly in a lament psalm that includes sudden mood swings. For example, Psalm 3 begins with an emotion of fear (v. 1) and shame (v. 2) but suddenly changes in v. 3 to one of confidence. That continues through his testimony in vv. 4–6, but in v. 7 we hear a cry for help, suggesting a possible return of anxiety. This is immediately followed, however, by a confidence that God will deal with the enemies and that the psalmist will be saved. As one person reads the poem aloud, others could show on their faces and in their body language[16] the emotions evident in each part of the poem. After doing that a couple times, the participants can try to go through the sequence of emotions without any words being read. This helps them focus on the poet's emotional state and ensure that in translation they use words that will bring out those feelings.

6.4 Engaging the Other Senses (Drawings, Colors, Shapes, Gestures)

The more senses that can be engaged in a poem, the more memorable it will be. Instead of enacting the emotions bodily, one could use colors to represent the emotions of each section of the poem. Or one could draw shapes to reflect various feelings.

Another way of remembering the text (found to be very popular with participants) is to use gestures for each section of the poem. For example, a six-verse psalm could be divided into three sections of two verses each, and each

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[15] B (boss) was linked with "king" (v. 1), E was linked with God's eternal nature (vv. 2b, 5c) and thus experienced, S with v. 1b, which refers to God's strength, and T with his trustworthy nature (v. 5a).

[16] See the importance of body language to recall material, as described in section 5.4.

of three groups would work on two verses. They would listen to the words being read aloud and then devise gestures or actions (including jumping or movement) to depict the main idea in each line or verse (not a gesture for each word). They would then teach their movements to the other two groups, and together they would learn the movements and gestures for the six verses. They would initially make the movements while someone reads the psalm, but after a few times of doing this, they can try to make the movements in sequence, without words. This exercise is based on the idea of physiological memory, where a pattern of motions becomes ingrained in memory. It is important that the actions and gestures carry the correct (implicit) emotions. This is an application of the principles concerning body memory (discussed in section 5.4).

6.5 Personal Experience

If possible, participants should have opportunity to reflect on the mood of the psalmist and consider whether they themselves have been through a similar experience. If so, they should spend some time recalling their own emotions from that experience. To help them do so, they could draw how they felt or jot down a few words that capture their emotions. Then, if they feel free to do so, it's helpful to share with others in a small group or in pairs. For example, Psalm 55 mentions the pain of being betrayed. Most people have a story of having been betrayed by someone close to them. By sharing it with another person and bringing the emotions back into short-term memory, they will enter more fully into the poet's mind as they try to translate the psalm.

6.6 Key Words Followed by Group Work

If the poem comprises more than ten verses, it is helpful to divide it into stanzas and deal with each stanza separately. Then, as they listen to the psalm being read, they think of a key idea which captures the main point of that stanza. They either jot down a word to help them remember that idea or they make a small drawing or sketch to remind them of what is important. In groups, they can share their key words or drawings, together using these to reformulate as much of the poem as possible from memory. Thereafter, they could divide into groups with each group focusing on one stanza. As the poem is read aloud again, they listen specially to their allocated stanza to discern any ideas they might have missed. Then the group can add to or adjust their version of that stanza. At this stage, it's often helpful for the group to put their stanza to music. A song or chant with rhythm helps them hold on to the ideas even more strongly.

For a psalm of six or fewer verses, it may be possible for a small group (each person focusing on a couple of verses) to almost memorize the contents, not in a rote fashion but to include all the ideas and their poetic arrangement. From their listening, they can usually work out an oral translation together and recite that. Giving such a memory poem a rhythmic, unison chant further helps everyone internalize the main ideas.

6.7 Composing One's Own Poem for Small Sections of Rhetoric

A useful exercise is to focus on a key part of the psalm (for instance, vv. 3–4 in Psalm 93) and encourage participants to write their own version of those lines (perhaps changing the metaphors to be more meaningful). Or, once the big picture of the psalm has been grasped, participants could write their own poetic version of the message of the poem. For example, Psalm 131 is only three verses long, and after understanding the exegesis, participants could be asked to compose a lullaby (or teaching song) for a child, warning against pride (v. 1) and encouraging the child to find

their identity in their relationship with God (v. 2). It's always good for participants to share their creative efforts with the larger group and, when appropriate, to explain why they focused on certain ideas.

6.8 Developing a Narrative-experience (with Symbols) to Remember Key Ideas and Their Order in the Psalm

Psalm 103 is lengthy, with many ideas in parallel. To help participants remember the key ideas and the order in which they occur, we constructed a narrative linking the "symbols" representing these ideas. In one case, participants acted out going on a day trip to a favorite park, dressed appropriately with hats, sunglasses, and walking sticks. There they experienced the warmth of the sunshine (consciously standing outside in silence for a minute, to absorb the feeling of sun on the skin), then noted a basket of "blessings" at their picnic site (a boiled egg, representing healing; an apple, representing forgiveness, with the link to Eden; bread, representing provision, as per the wilderness provision; an avocado, representing God's special goodness; and a feather, representing the eagle and the restoration of youth). Then they saw a sign to "Table Mountain,"[17] which recalled the mountaintop experience of Moses receiving the law; the sign reminded them of God giving us his law and teaching us the way to live righteously. Each experience in the imaginary park outing raised a link to an idea in the psalm. All the senses were invoked, with flowers to smell, popcorn to taste at a picnic, a bell ringing each time someone took the cable car up Table Mountain, views to imagine from the top of the mountain, the sunshine, and rough sand (to put their feet in, in remembrance of the dust of which we are made), activating the sense of feeling.

Participants enjoyed the surprise element in the activity, and many went over the journey several times,[18] using the symbols to remind them of the key ideas and their order, as they rewrote their versions of the psalm. These individual memory-poems were collected, and some expressions used were considered to be part of the final translation. Regardless of whether the activity provided language for the translation, each participant had a better remembrance of the different characteristics of God being praised in the poem.

We repeated this exercise with a different language group, with adjustments made to the context and physical situation. This time, at each station, participants were encouraged to not only link the "prop" with a key idea in the psalm but also to recite the verse as they looked at the prop. This proved very successful in helping them retain more details of the psalm.

7. Examples of Applying Internalization Exercises

Next, examples of psalms from different genres illustrate how the main themes, emotions, and sequence can be internalized before translating them orally.

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[17] This workshop took place in Cape Town, with Table Mountain a prominent and much-loved place to visit.
[18] The facilitator led the group around the various "stations" with the symbols and explained what each referred to. The participants then went around in pairs, explaining the symbolism to one another, and thereafter they went individually, trying to recite the relevant verse at each station. This last action was particularly helpful in enabling them to recompose the psalm with a high level of accuracy.

7.1 Psalm 3 (Lament)

In Psalm 3, knowing the backstory (2 Sam 7; 12:10–11; 15:13–16; as well as 18:33) is important. Thus, participants can narrate (with others miming) or enact part of the story, particularly 2 Samuel 15:13–16. Some language groups also made a song after they had internalized the psalm's key ideas (as described in section 6.2.1).

7.2 Psalm 93 (Praise)

The middle verses of this psalm lend themselves to performance, as described in section 6.2.2. Another creative activity was to work in pairs, with one person thinking of a different metaphor to use in v. 3 and composing her own version of that verse, showing the emotion becoming greater as the problem increases. Then the other adds their version of v. 4, declaring that God is greater than whatever problems v. 3 indicated. They were then encouraged to make this into a chant or a song and perform it before the others.

7.3 Psalm 133 (Wisdom)

It's helpful to enact this psalm, making it more memorable. While someone reads the preferred translation, others act out the text. One person plays the role of God (hidden from view) pouring out oil on Aaron's head and down the beard. On the side, people can show, in different ways, what it means to "live in unity/harmony" (helping someone cross a street, listening to each other, giving a hug, and so forth). On the other side of the stage, some people act out wilted flowers, which then receive the dew (someone acting that part, sprinkling refreshment), and the flowers come alive.

7.4 Psalm 131 (Wisdom)

To get inside the emotion of v. 1, participants could mime what proud people look like (the expression on their face), how they walk, how they greet, and (using words) how they talk to someone else (of lower "status"). Then (to relate to the emotion of v. 2) participants can close their eyes and imagine themselves on God's lap, held close, with God stroking their hair and singing to them. They can discuss how they felt (as the proud person and as the contented child) and why that may be so.

They could also write a four-line poem (in their language) as a lullaby for a mother to sing to a child, telling the child not to be like the person in v. 1 but like the contented child in v. 2.

Another activity is to draw a diagram or shape that represents the "soul" of the proud person and another that represents the "soul" of the child. Then discuss the color they associate with a proud person (and why) and similarly, what color do they link with a calm, secure person, and why?

7.5 Psalm 91 (Encouragement)

It's always helpful to pay attention to the voices in a psalm and consider who the addressees are. It may not be totally clear who is speaking and to whom, but when someone acts out the psalm and tries to make sense of the dialogue, these details often fall into place. Psalm 91 seems to have three voices: a priest, the worshiper (or psalmist), and God. The worshiper begins with a declaration of trust (vv. 1–2), which the priest responds to with ongoing encouragement (vv. 3–8). Some translations have v. 9a spoken as an interruption by the psalmist, and then the priest continues again

to declare the security the psalmist can have (vv. 9b–13) because of his trust in the Lord. Then the final verses are spoken by God in further affirmation.

When enacting a psalm, one must also think of the audience and when they might be speaking in response to the words of the priest or of a person giving testimony. Even if no audience responses are apparent in the psalm, the people acting the psalm need to imagine performing it in front of their own community. If the audience is likely to interject or make encouraging comments or actions, then they should do so, too.

8. Ensuring Accuracy in the Translation of a Psalm

In addition to the elements of accuracy typically checked in a Bible translation (such as having the same content as the Hebrew text), the emotive and rhetorical force of the psalm must also line up with that of the original. The translation should show the same emotions and the same swing of emotions as the Hebrew text. The persuasive power of the translated poem should be close to the original—whether it uses aesthetics, or heightened pace, or words in focus. Attention must be given to ensure that the listener will be moved in a way similar to how one imagines the original hearer would have been emotionally moved.

8.1 Important Criteria

When evaluating a translation prepared for oral performance (a literary or poetic translation), the criteria are not exactly the same as for traditional written translation. For the latter, accuracy to the original text is paramount, with naturalness, clarity, and acceptability also important. For a poetic translation, accuracy is important, along with clarity and acceptability (by the local community), and naturalness is critical (hence all the attention given to internalizing the poem). Nevertheless, other factors relevant to oral performance—particularly aurality and artistry—are also important in poetic translation (Wendland 2004, chapter 10). Aurality refers to the sounds and the communication function of sound patterns in terms of three criteria: memorability, arousing emotion through rhetorical devices, and ease of hearing. Artistry reflects the creativity of the poet. This includes the use of poetic devices and memorable metaphors, sound patterns (such as ideophones or alliteration) in appropriate places, and in general the overall aesthetic effect and power to persuade (or move) the audience.

8.2 Examples

Below are some psalms (or excerpts thereof) translated in workshops by people with no previous experience in translation. The emotional and rhetorical accuracy of these poems is assessed, relative to that in the original Hebrew poems.

8.2.1 Psalm 93:3–4 (isiZulu, South Africa)

3a. Izilingo noma ziyanda, Simakade,	Temptations even if they increase, Lord,
3b. izilingo noma ziyanda nokundlondlobala, Simakade,	temptations even if they increase and become huge, Lord,
3c. izilingo noma ziyanda, zinga khula nemthwalo, Simakade,	temptations even if they increase, increase to [be a] burden, Lord,
4a. kuko konke unamandla, Simakade,	above all you are mighty, Lord,
4b. kuko konke unamandla,	above all you are mighty,

4c. okunqoba, kuko konke,	your power is victorious above all,
4d. amandla akho ayanginqobela.	your power fights for me.

The rhetorical force in these verses (apparent in the Hebrew) has been captured in the translation through repetition and growing intensity. Many poetic devices are evident across the poem (alliteration and assonance and several chiastic structures), and a good rhythm has been established (by adding a line in parallel in v. 4d). The translator also made the poem personal with his application in v. 4d. He also chose to interpret the metaphor of 'waves' as 'temptations,' again making it something real to him in his situation. Thus, the translation has strong rhetorical and emotional power, as did the original.

The oral/aural performance also needs to be assessed, and there the poem showed great success with the audience. The performance began with drums, and then a chorus joined in, singing a catchy rhythm (*iyomama . . . eyebaba*), calling mothers and fathers to listen. This continued for a minute and a half. Then, with humming by the whole group in the background, someone spoke the words of the translated psalm. At the end, the group hummed the tune again twice, and then sang the chorus (vv. 3–4) twice. The audience seemed to enjoy the catchy introduction, humming along, and the repetition of the chorus meant that they went home with those words memorised. Thus, its acceptance by the community and its poetic artistry, as well as the use of much sound play, meant that this translation satisfied well the criteria of a good aural translation.

8.2.2 Psalm 23 (Kaaps, South Africa)

3b	Hy lead my opi straight en narrow vi Sy ônne.	He leads me on the straight and narrow for his honour.
4a	Al loep ek deeri boellits,	Even if I walk through the bullets,
4b	al issit donke om my,	even if it's dark around me,
4c	sal ekkie paapi, wan U Yirre protek en guide my.	I won't be afraid, because You, LORD, protect and guide me.
5d	Die tafel is gedek met vetkoek en spanspek,	The table is set with vetkoek and sweet melon,
5e	nou't ek respek.	now I have gained respect.
5f	Hoe's dai vi jou?	How's that for you?
6a	Nai een ding; diesi move:	One thing; here's the move (point):
6b	U kyk kwaai na my!	You look well after me!

The emotive power of this translation needs to be heard and seen to be recognized. The use of highly loaded emotional terms for so many of the images and metaphors (for example, *Vetkoek en spanspek* [in v. 5d, highly evocative of a special feast] and *boellits* for the 'valley of the shadow of death' [a constant experience for them in their violent community]) have strong emotional resonance, as does the use of an interrogative in v. 5f (a sign of natural speech in this community).

The translation may appear to be too free for some, but from an emotional and performance perspective, it succeeds. It speaks to the people's hearts and their minds (being their own form of speaking, as is apparent in v. 6a).

8.2.3 Psalm 3:7 (Kaaps, South Africa)

Kykie Jirre, stiek yt man!	Look here, Lord, come and help!
Maak 'n way virrie man.	Make a way for the man (me).
U hettie manskappe wat tien my opgestaanit gesilence,	You have silenced the enemies that stood up against me,
briek hulle kaake en maak hulle bekke toe.	broken their jawbones and made their mouths closed.

Again, the Kaaps translation uses very colloquial language, typical of the way they speak. This immediately brings ownership to the text, and a sense of pride (a positive emotion, which the psalm seeks to produce by its content). Also, their use of repetition (*man*) and alliteration (with the *k* sound in the last line) gives poetic force along with the emotional engagement.

8.2.4 Psalm 123:3–4 (Meetto, Mozambique)

3a. Pwiya, nnoonele ikiriri. 3b. Nnoonele ikiriri, Pwiya, 3c. maana uhonitosa uveehiya.	LORD, have mercy on us. Have mercy on us, LORD, because we are fed up being despised.
4a. Uhonitosa ucocopolaciya n'atthu owiilema, 4b. n'utarawaciya n'atthu owiihelela.	We are fed up being despised by proud people We are despised by the arrogant people.

The chiasm in v. 3a–b is a forceful way to draw attention to the content. Then the repetition of the expression 'fed up being despised' (v. 3c) with an intensification (v. 4a) and then a restatement (v. 4b) gives the poem strong emotive power, being persuasive.

9. Conclusion

By focusing on the emotional content in psalms and trying to get inside the poem and feel its rhetorical force before beginning to translate it into a RL, we can make many discoveries which might be missed in traditional translation approaches. Also, the method described opens the possibility for poets and musicians in the community to take significant roles in the translation of psalms, thus incorporating their creative gifting. The research done to date in various communities in Africa is promising, not only in yielding a beautiful literary translation but also in discipling participants. As they work through the process, they discover the richness of the text and find it speaking powerfully into their own lives.

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