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The Translation of Quotative Frames in the Hebrew Bible¹

Abstract

In recounting or representing speech, both oral storyteller and literary narrator as well as the modern translator have at their disposal similar interpretive choices in how to represent it, ranging from mimesis to paraphrase to a simple notice that speech occurred. Most commonly, these metapragmatic comments take the shape of quotative frames, which introduce the represented speech and specify various pragmatic features of it, such as the original speaker, the original addressee, the nature of the speech event, or the reason for the speech event. The metapragmatic variety of quotative frames encountered within the Hebrew Bible has usually been described as the work of authors/redactors and attributed to written literary style. In this paper we first describe the metapragmatic shapes of quotative frames in Biblical Hebrew narrative and their discourse pragmatic functions. We then review recent evidence which suggests that at least some of the metapragmatic variety in biblical narrative reflects the oral strategies of representation employed by the storytellers/performers of originally oral texts. Finally, we explore the ways in which modern translators of the biblical text also engage in interpretation (or, a metapragmatic analysis) of the speech events portrayed in the text, using the story of the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34) as an example.

Keywords

Hebrew Bible, Book of Genesis, Literary narrator, Metapragmatic analysis, Quotative frames, Bible translation.

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1. Introduction

In recounting or representing speech, both oral storyteller and literary narrator have at their disposal similar interpretive choices in how to represent it, ranging from mimesis to paraphrase to a simple notice that speech occurred. One of the most powerful interpretive choices, however, relates to the way in which a storyteller/narrator chooses to frame the speech. The quotative frame constitutes, in effect, a metapragmatic analysis on the part of the storyteller/narrator concerning pragmatic features of the original locution, such as the original speaker, the original addressee, the linguistic code/signal of the speech, the nature of the speech event, or the reason for the speech event.

The syntactic variety of quotative frames encountered within the Hebrew Bible has usually been described as the work of authors/redactors and attributed to written literary style. Recent evidence has been provided, however, which suggests that some of the variation in quotative frames in biblical narrative reflects instead differences relating to the oral-written interface of the biblical text in a hearing dominant culture (Miller-Naudé and Naudé forthcoming). One quotative frame exhibits characteristics of an oral strategy of representation employed by the storytellers/performers of originally oral texts; its presence in the biblical text is a fossil of oral storytelling. Another quotative frame, however, exhibits characteristics of a written strategy of speech representation and likely had its origin in scribal practice. Both quotative frames are used with significant metapragmatic impact within biblical narrative.

In the same way that storyteller and narrator must interpret the pragmatics of a locution when they provide a quotative frame for it, the modern Bible translator also has interpretive choice in how to translate the quotative frame. The interpretive or hermeneutic role of the translator, in general, has recently been highlighted by Venuti (2013). Venuti calls for a movement away from an instrumental view of translation (i.e. translation as transfer) towards an interpretative model of translation (i.e. translation as hermeneutics). In translating quotative frames, the translator must determine the pragmatic, metapragmatic and discourse pragmatic functions of the quotative frame in the source text and then determine which pragmatic features to make explicit within the translated text. In the process of translating, then, the translator performs a metapragmatic analysis of the locution and then seeks to re-create those pragmatics for the target text readers through the way that the quotative frame “frames” the locution. In this way, the role of the storyteller/narrator is extended and recreated by the translator.

In this article we first briefly introduce the concept of metapragmatics and describe the metapragmatic shapes of quotative frames in Biblical Hebrew narrative and their discourse pragmatic functions. We then review recent research concerning the oral-written interface in the biblical text and present evidence

which suggests that some of the metapragmatic variety in biblical narrative reflects the oral strategies of representation employed by the storytellers/performers of originally oral texts, whereas another kind of metapragmatic quotative frame relates to scribal practice. Finally, we explore the ways in which modern translators of the biblical text also engage in a metapragmatic analysis of the speech events portrayed in the text (which may or may not portray the same metapragmatic analysis as the biblical storyteller/narrator), using the story of the rape of Dinah (Genesis 34) as an example.

2. Varieties of quotative frames in Biblical Hebrew

2.1. Metapragmatics and the representation of speech

The recursive use of language to describe or characterize itself is described as the *metalinguistic* use of language (Jakobson 1971). Two kinds of metalanguage can serve as illustrations. Definition is metalanguage used to characterize the meaning of language (e.g. *A braai is a South African barbeque*). Grammatical description is metalanguage used to characterize grammatical features of language (e.g. *Only a finite verb can serve as the matrix verb in a sentence*).

The term *metapragmatic* is a specialized use of metalanguage, focusing upon the recursive use of language to describe pragmatic features of language (see Miller 1996/2003: 41–91). In linguistics, *pragmatics* refers generally to the relationship between the linguistic signal and its interpreters. More specifically, it can be used to describe language as intentional, purposive, social behavior as well as the relationship that language bears to its context of use (Silverstein 1987). Representations of speech are metapragmatic in both senses of the term “pragmatic”.

The way in which the reporting speaker chooses to *represent* the original locution involves metapragmatic choices. Direct speech (*oratio recta*) and indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*) are the traditional ways to describe two basic strategies for representing the original locution in many languages, especially Western languages (Miller-Naudé 2013). In direct speech, the original locution is represented as if it is a precise replica of the original locution. In indirect speech, the original locution is recast so that it is represented from the deictic perspective of the reporting speaker. However, the metapragmatic choices are, in fact, much greater and more finely nuanced – a reporting speaker may, for example, provide a paraphrase or only the mentioning of the original locution.

The way in which the reporting speaker chooses to *frame* the original locution (and thus to incorporate it into the story or narrative) also involves metapragmatic choices. With the quotative frame, the reporting speaker provides, in effect, a metapragmatic analysis of those aspects that he/she deems significant

concerning the original speech event. For example, pragmatic features of the context of use may be included in the frame – such as the participants of the speech event (speaker, addressee), the time/location, the linguistic code (language). The quotative frame also provides an opportunity for the reporting speaker's metapragmatic analysis of the purpose/intention of the original speech event. This pragmatic aspect is most commonly conveyed through the choice of the speech verb used. For example, in reporting the original locution *This road is closed* as spoken by a police officer, different analyses of the pragmatics of the original speech event can be given:

- (1) original locution: *This road is closed*.
 Metapragmatic analyses conveyed by the speech verb:
- (1a) The officer *said*, “This road is closed.”
 - (1b) The officer *replied*, “This road is closed.”
 - (1c) The officer *insisted*, “This road is closed!”
 - (1d) The officer *shouted*, “This road is closed!”
 - (1e) The officer *patiently reiterated*, “This road is closed!”

The metapragmatic analysis provided by the quotative frame provides an interpretation of the locution which characterises those aspects of the speech event which the reporting speaker wishes to highlight. In (1a), the generic verb “say” is neutral, indicating only the fact of the speech event. In (1b), the verb “reply” indicates that the speech is connected to a preceding speech, whereas (1c) implies that the reply has already been given but has not been accepted and (1e) further adds that the reiterated response of the officer is “patient.” In (1d), there is no indication of the placement of the speech within the dialogue, but rather the verb highlights the nature of the speech. The characterization of the speech as conveyed by the verbal choice of reporting speaker (or storyteller/narrator) constitutes a metapragmatic analysis of the original locution.

2.2. Syntactic features and metapragmatics

In Biblical Hebrew, direct speech is the dominant means of reporting speech; indirect speech occurs but it is much less frequent and is syntactically and semantically restrained. In narrative, direct speech is introduced with a quotative frame which almost always precedes the quotation; in poetry, the quotative frame of direct speech may occur also in the middle or end of the quotation, or there may be no quotative frame to introduce the quotation. In narrative, the direct quotative frame occurs in one of three syntactic shapes. (The discussion in this section summarizes Miller 1996/2003: 143–232). In the first type, a single-verb frame, there is only one finite metapragmatic verb, as illustrated in (2):

(2) Genesis 34:11

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁכֶם אֶל־אָבִיהָ וְאֶל־אֶחָיו
 אֲמַצְאֶחֶן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְאֲשֶׁר תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי אֲתֵן

Then Shechem *said* to her father and her brothers,

“May I find grace in your eyes and what you say to me, I will pay.”

The quotative frame has one finite metapragmatic verb (וַיֹּאמֶר), which is semantically neutral, indicating only the fact of the speech event. It does not provide any other information concerning the purpose or intention of the speech; this is the most common type of single verb frame. The quotative frame also provides a metapragmatic analysis of the participants of the speech event, namely, the speaker (שְׁכֶם) and his addressees (אֶל־אָבִיהָ וְאֶל־אֶחָיו).

In the second type of direct quotative frame, the multiple-verb frame, there are two or more finite metapragmatic verbs in the frame. The arrangement of verbs always has the most semantically general verb last; usually a form of אָמַר is the last verb, but less frequently a form of דָּבַר occurs:

(3) 1 Samuel 20:32

וַיַּעַן יְהוֹנָתָן אֶת־שָׁאוּל אָבִיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו
 לָמָּה יוּמָת מָה עָשָׂה

But Jonathan *answered* Saul his father and *said* to him,

“Why should he be put to death? What has he done?”

The two verbs are both in the narrative tense and should mean “And then he answered and then he said.” However, within a quotative frame the two finite metapragmatic verbs both refer to the same speech event involving the same speech participants.

In the third type of direct quotative frame, the לֹא־אָמַר frame, there is one finite metapragmatic verb as well as the form לֹא־אָמַר, an infinitival form of the verb אָמַר which has become grammaticalized to introduce speech. This frame is illustrated in (4):

(4) Genesis 34:4

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁכֶם אֶל־חָמוֹר אָבִיו לֹא־אָמַר
 קַח־לִי אֶת־הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה

Shechem *said* to Hamor his father *saying*,

“Take for me this girl as a wife.”

The three types of quotative frames relate in part to conventions of biblical narrative and in part to the choice of the oral storyteller and/or author/narrator. Single-verb frames are the simplest and most neutral (in linguistic terms, “unmarked”). The use of the neutral verb אמר “say” in a single-verb frame is most common in Biblical Hebrew, occurring over 2,000 times as opposed to 34 times with דבר “speak,” 9 times with קרא “call,” 7 times with צוה “command,” and only a few times with זעק “cry out,” שבוע “swear an oath,” שלח “send a message,” שאל “ask,” כתב “write,” and שמע “hear.” The inventory of speech verbs in single-verb frames is thus very small and probably much smaller than in most target languages.

Multiple-verb frames are used in dialogic contexts. The verbs that occur in first position relate to speech that takes place interactively, such as: ענה “answer,” קרא “call,” ברכך “bless,” נדר “vow,” ספר “narrate,” פלל “pray,” דבר “speak,” נגד “inform,” צוה “command,” צעק “cry out,” שבוע “swear,” etc. A verb that does not refer to speaking, such as שמע “hear” or כתב “write,” does not occur in this kind of frame. Within biblical narrative, this quotative frame is used sparingly and usually introduces the most salient or important speech in a dialogue.

Frames with לאמר may be used with a wide variety of finite verbs, including metapragmatic verbs, metapragmatic phrasal expressions (e.g. בוא התשועה “the report came” 2 Sam 13:30), psychological verbs and expressions (e.g. בטח “trust” 2 Kgs 19:10) and verbs which are neither metapragmatic nor psychological (e.g. בוא “come” Gen 47:15) in which the speech depicted in the quotation occurs alongside the action of the verb. Frames with לאמר have specific discourse pragmatic functions within biblical narrative. They are typically used when non-prototypically dialogic features of the speech situation are in view; in this respect they contrast with multiple-verb frames. Frames with לאמר may be used, for example, to introduce a quotation which is retold, iterative, hypothetical or fabricated. Frames with לאמר may also be used when the pragmatics of the speech situation are less than prototypically dialogue, for example, when the speaker is unidentified or less than a full character, when the addressees are unspecified, anonymous or absent. Frames with לאמר, in contrast to multiple-verb frames, may have metapragmatic verbs and expressions which refer to non-speech communication (e.g. כתב “write,” צחק “laugh”), to the reception of information (e.g. שמע “hear”), and to the absence of verbal communication (e.g. הרש “be silent”).

2.3. The oral-written interface

The syntactic variety of quotative frames encountered within the Hebrew Bible has usually been described as the work of authors/redactors and attributed to written literary style. Recent evidence has been provided, however, which suggests that some of the variation in quotative frames in biblical narrative

reflects instead differences relating to the oral-written interface of the biblical text in a hearing dominant culture (see Miller-Naudé and Naudé forthcoming). We summarize and expand the argumentation here.

The biblical text emerged within a society in which there was no dichotomy between oral and written communication, but rather an oral-written interface (Carr 2005, 2011). Orality and performance are not prior stages which gave way to a literate culture, in contrast to the perspective promoted by Gunkel (1930/1967) and his work in the previous century promoting his oral formulaic theory for the oral composition of portions of the biblical text. Instead, recent research has suggested instead that the role of orality and performance must be acknowledged alongside that of scribal activity on the composition and redaction of the biblical text (Polak 1998; Millard 1999). The interrelationship of orality and writing has been described as one of dominance – either “hearing-dominant” cultures or “text-dominant” cultures (Walton and Sandy 2013). On the basis of these distinctions, we have previously described the technologizing of the Bible and its media history as follows (Makutoane, Miller-Naudé and Naudé 2015; see also Littau 2011):

Hearing-dominant

Oral/Aural-written communication / verbal interpretive culture

- i) Oral/Aural Communication (the oral/aural Bible)
- ii) Handwritten manuscript communication (manuscript Bible)

Text-dominant

Print communication (printed Bible) / typographic interpretive culture

Electronic/media communication (electronic Bible) / digital-media interpretive culture

The oral and written dimension are intimately intertwined in the hearing-dominant phase of the Bible. An elite minority of storytellers and scribes transmitted the texts. Oral tradition was transmitted through the memorization of ancient traditions for oral performance. Written versions of the traditions were reference points for an on-going oral tradition of performance. The biblical writings are then primarily the “fossil” remains of oral performances during the hearing-dominant phase of the Bible (Rhoads 2012; Fowler 2009).

Although features of oral literature are no longer viewed as universal (De Vries 2012), features that are typical of orality have been identified (Parry 1971; Lord 2000). Because oral style is related to promoting the memory of oral traditions, it tends to be characterized by mimetic, rhythmic, bilateral and repetitive expressions (Jousse 2000). It may also include repetition, reduplication, mimicry, gesture, onomatopoeia and ideophones (Finegan 2007: 45; 1970). Ong’s well-known description of the systemic features of orality, which enhance the

memorability of an utterance include: additive rather than subordinate, aggregative rather than analytic, redundant or copious, conservative or traditionalist, close to the human life-world, agonistically toned, empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced, homeostatic, and situational rather than abstract (Ong 1982: 37–56; see also Makutoane and Naudé 2004; Naudé and Makutoane 2006).

In examining the three kinds of direct quotative frames, an argument can be made that they differ with respect to oral and written features (Miller-Naudé and Naudé forthcoming). Multiple-verb frames exhibit characteristics of oral strategies of representation employed by storytellers/performers of originally oral texts. Multiple verb frames have a parallel (bilateral), repetitive, additive (coordinate) structure to represent one speech event. This can be seen, first, in the use of two or more metapragmatic verbs to represent a single speech event. Second, although the “participation framework” (the participants of the speech event, such as speaker and addressee) of each metapragmatic verb is identical within the quotative frame, reference to the participants may be repeated with more than one verb or distributed among the verbs. In (3) above, both speaker and addressee are explicitly indicated only in connection with the first verb of the multiple verb frame. In (5) below, the speaker of the speech event is indicated in connection with the first verb, while the addressee of the same speech event is indicated in connection with the second verb:

(5) 2 Samuel 18:28

וַיִּקְרָא אַחִימֵעַז וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלוֹם

Then *Ahmaaz* called out and said *to the king*, “Peace.”

In (6), the speaker and addressee are explicitly mentioned in connection with both speech verbs:²

(6) Judges 11:19

וַיִּשְׁלַח יִשְׂרָאֵל מְלָאכִים אֶל־סִיחֹן מֶלֶךְ־הָאֲמֹרִי מֶלֶךְ־חֶשְׁבֹן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל נַעֲבֹר־הַנָּא בְּאֶרְצְךָ עַד־מְקוֹמִי

“Then *Israel* sent messengers *to Sihon king of the Amorites, the king of Heshbon* and *Israel* said *to him*, ‘Allow us to cross through your country to our homeland.’ ...”

Third, the repetitive, coordinate nature of the multiple-verb frames is part of a larger pattern of oral formulaic patterning in biblical narrative in which

² For an exhaustive discussion of the various configurations of speaker and addressee in multiple-verb frames, see Miller 1996/2003: 159–161.

two clauses relate to a single action (Polak 2013: 908–910; see also Polak 1989: 435–483). This kind of formulaic patterning probably “had its roots in ancient Israelite oral literature” (Polak 2013: 910).

Fourth, the variety that is exhibited within the relatively formulaic nature of quotative frames suggests an origin in oral storytelling – a storyteller had both precedent and formula but also scope for variation in the ways that they are shaped.

Finally, multiple-verb frames are never found in the extra-biblical Hebrew letters or inscriptions from the time of the Bible, which were scribally produced. Multiple-verb frames, thus seem to reflect oral style.

Frames with *לֵאמֹר*, by contrast, exhibit characteristics of a written strategy of speech representation and likely originated in scribal practice. This determination can be substantiated by, first, the fact that *לֵאמֹר* frames, in contrast to multiple-verb frames, incorporate more than one speech verb into the frame by means of subordination (hypotaxis) rather than coordination – namely, the use of the grammaticalized infinitive construct *לֵאמֹר*. Second, in contrast to multiple-verb frames, frames with *לֵאמֹר* are found within the ancient Hebrew letters, as in the following report by a royal official to the king:

(7) Lachish Letter 3:13–16

וּלְעַבְדְּךָ . הַגֵּד לְאֹמֶר . יִרְדֶּה שֶׁר הַצִּבָּא . כְּנִי[הוּ] בֶן אֶלְנָתָן לְבָא . מִצְרַיִם

To your servant *it was reported saying*: “General Konyahu son of Elnatan has gone down to enter Egypt.”

Infinitival forms of the verb *אָמַר* are found within quotative frames in other Northwest Semitic languages, including Phoenician (the Eshmunazor Inscription), Imperial Aramaic (the Ashur ostrakon), and in the Jewish Aramaic letters and contracts from Elephantine (see Miller 1996/2006: 163–167; Miller 2006). In the ancient Near East, letters and inscriptions were routinely produced by professionally trained scribes. We conclude, therefore, that *לֵאמֹר* frames had their origin within ancient scribal practice.

In biblical narrative, the choice of a quotative frame related to the metapragmatic concerns of the storyteller/narrator. A single verb frame was the pragmatically neutral means for introducing direct speech. A multiple-verb frame, which had its origins in oral storytelling, was used to highlight the dialogic nature of the speech or the most salient speech within a dialogue. A *לֵאמֹר* frame, which had its origins in scribal practice, was used to highlight the non-dialogic nature of the speech.

One final feature of oral dialogue which impinges upon translation involves the most basic feature of oral conversation, the *adjacency pair* – paired, adjacent turns of speech by alternate speakers in a dialogue (Sacks 1992; Schegloff 2007).

Adjacency pairs involve a speech by one speaker which is interactionally joined to a speech by another speaker by means of the contingent pragmatics of the speech events. For example, if the first speaker makes a request, the second speaker is expected to respond to the request with either agreement or refusal. If the first speaker asks a question, the second speaker is expected to respond with a cooperative answer. Until an appropriate reply is given to the first speaker, the adjacency pair remains open. In reporting dialogue, the reporting speaker may choose to highlight the pragmatics of dialogue. In other words, the reporting speaker may provide a metapragmatic interpretation of the dialogue.

To summarize thus far, in reporting speech, the reporting speaker – whether storyteller or narrator – has significant options in how to portray the original locution. Those metapragmatic choices may reflect the style of the reporting speaker as well as concerns of the broader structure.

3. Translation of metapragmatic features of quotative frames

In this section, we analyze the ways in which a selection of English translations have rendered the metapragmatic quotative frames in Genesis 34. This chapter depicts the story of the rape of Dinah, Jacob's daughter by his first wife, Leah, by a young man from a rival ethnic group, the subsequent negotiations by him and his father to marry her, and the ultimate revenge of her brothers. Although the story has been extensively studied as a literary composition or a composite scribal story,³ we will concentrate here only on the metapragmatics of the quotative frames and how translations have handled them.

The story opens with Shechem's violent rape of Dinah followed by his change of heart:

(8) Genesis 34:3

וַתִּדְבֹק נַפְשׁוֹ בְּדִינָה בַת־יַעֲקֹב וַיֶּאֱהַב אֶת־הַנְּעָרָה וַיְדַבֵּר עַל־לֵב הַנְּעָרָה

And then his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob and he loved the young woman and *he spoke upon the heart of the girl*.

The sentence “he spoke upon the heart of the girl” is an instance of reduced indirect speech in which only the fact of speaking is described but the content is omitted. Some translations follow the interpretation that Shechem the rapist is speaking “tenderly” to his victim:

³ See, for example, Berlin 1988: 76–79; Sternberg 1985: 445–475; Fewell and Gunn 1991; Sternberg 1992; Gordon 1994; Amit 2012: 47–51; Van Seters 2013: 169.

- (8a) NIV – he spoke tenderly to her (also NRSV, ESV).
 NJPS – he spoke to the maiden tenderly.
 NLT – he tried to win her affection with tender words.

The other interpretation is that he was trying to change her heart so that she would love him:

- (8b) CEB – He loved the young woman and tried to win her heart.
 GNB – he tried to win her affection.
 Message – he wooed her.
 NET – he spoke romantically to her.

The CEV provides the content of his speech from the immediately preceding context:

- (8c) CEV – So he told her how much he loved her.

The Inclusive Bible adds a metapragmatic interpretation of his motive:

- (8d) Inclusive – He fell deeply in love with Dinah, *regretted his act*, and spoke tenderly to her.

In verses 4–7, there is an interplay of oral and written style in the subsequent dialogue. We can schematically represent the adjacency pairs in these verses as follows:⁴

- (9) Gen 34:4–7

A1 Shechem said to Hamor his father,
 “Take for me this girl as a wife.”

B1 Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah.
 But his sons were in the field with his cattle.

B2 Jacob kept silent until they came home.

A2 Then Hamor the father of Shechem came out to Jacob to speak to him.

C1 Jacob’s sons came in from the field when they heard.

C2 The men were distressed and very angry...

⁴ The capital letters identify the parts of a single adjacency pair; the numerals indicate the position of the pair-part within the adjacency pair.

The adjacency pair of Shechem and his father in A1 and A2 is interrupted by the parallel adjacency pair between Jacob and his sons in B1 and B2. The interaction between Jacob and his sons is taken up again in C1 and C2. The interwoven adjacency pairs serve to highlight the contrasts and comparisons between the various participants. We will consider ways in which the translations represent some of these metapragmatic features.

Shechem first enlists the help of his father to arrange the marriage:

(10) Genesis 34:4 (repeated from [4] above)

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁכֵם אֶל-הָמוֹר אָבִיו לֵאמֹר
 קַח-לִי אֶת-הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת לְאִשָּׁה

Shechem said to Hamor his father saying,
 “Take for me this girl as a wife.”

In the Hebrew, this is a *לֵאמֹר* frame, probably because the response to the request is delayed in the narrative to allow for the alternative perspective of Jacob and his sons. The English translations translate fairly literally, with a few exceptions. The Inclusive Bible inserts an additional speech event, a discussion with his father concerning the delicate situation, before he makes his request:

(10a) Inclusive – *So Shechem talked to his father Hamor, and said, “Arrange for me to marry her.”*

The Message takes the opposite approach with Shechem going directly to Hamor and omitting a verb of speaking: this implies that Shechem is impulsive rather than deliberative:

(10b) Message – Shechem *went* to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl for my wife.”

The CEV suggests surprize on the part of the storyteller concerning the intended marriage. More importantly, the CEV transforms the direct speech of Hebrew into indirect speech:

(10c) CEV – He even asked his father to get her for his wife.

The reception of information concerning the rape by Jacob and his silent response is deeply troubling:

(11) Genesis 34:5

וַיִּשְׁמַע יַעֲקֹב שֶׁמֶע כִּי טָמְא אֶת־דִּינָה בְּתוֹ
 וּבָנָיו הָיוּ אֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ בַּשָּׂדֶה
 וְהִחָרֵשׁ יַעֲקֹב עַד־בָּאִם

Jacob heard that he had defiled his daughter Dinah.
 But his sons were in the field with his cattle.
 Jacob kept silent until they came.

A number of translations attempt to make the story less damning to Israel's patriarch. The CEV, for example, omits the content of what Jacob heard and translates "Jacob heard what had happened."

(11a) CEV – Meanwhile, Jacob heard *what had happened* but his sons were out in the fields with the cattle, so he kept quiet until they came.

The CEB depicts Jacob's silence as the result of reasonable deliberation:

(11b) CEB – Now Jacob heard that Shechem defiled his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with the animals in the countryside, so *he decided* to keep quiet until they came back.

A number of translations explicitize Jacob's silence as doing nothing:

(11c) GNB – *he did nothing* until they came back.

NIV – When Jacob heard that his daughter Dinah had been defiled, his sons were in the fields with his livestock; *so he did nothing* about it until they came home.

Hamor goes to talk to Jacob and his sons, thus positively responding to the request of Shechem to arrange the marriage which was depicted in verse 4:

(12) Genesis 34:6

וַיֵּצֵא חָמוֹר אָבִי־שָׁכֶם אֶל־יַעֲקֹב לְדַבֵּר אִתּוֹ

Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.

However, the translations do not recognize this verse as forming part of the dialogue, but translate it as straightforward prose. The GNB is representative:

(12a) GNB – Shechem's father went out to talk to Jacob

Similarly, the reception of information concerning the rape of Dinah by her brothers and their furious response is also part of the dialogic structure:

(13) Genesis 34:7

וּבְנֵי יַעֲקֹב בָּאוּ מִן־הַשָּׂדֶה בְּשָׁמְעָם
וַיִּתְעַצְבוּ הָאָנָשִׁים וַיַּחֲרֹר לָהֶם מְאֹד כִּי־נָבְלָה עָשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל לְשָׁכַב אֶת־בֵּת־יַעֲקֹב וְכֵן לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה

Now Jacob's sons came in from they field when they heard. The men were distressed and very angry, because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter – a thing not to be done.

Only the CEB portrays the brothers' response as if reporting their words – note that the tense of their reported words represents their deictic stance and not that of the narrator.

(13a) CEB – Just then, Jacob's sons got back from the countryside. When they heard what had happened, they were outraged and very angry, because Shechem had disgraced Israel by sleeping with Jacob's daughter. *Such things are simply not done* (italics added).

Hamor as Shechem's father first speaks to Jacob and his sons:

(14) Genesis 34:8

וַיִּדְבֹר חַמּוֹר אֹתָם לֵאמֹר שְׁכֶם בְּנִי חֲשָׁקָה נַפְשׁוֹ בְּבָתְּכֶם תִּגְוֹ נָא אֲתָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה

And Hamor *spoke* with them, *saying*, “My son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him in marriage.

The translations are usually quite literal in this verse. Note, however, that the GNB identifies “him” (viz. Jacob) as the addressee of Hamor's speech in place of the third-person pronoun אֹתָם “with them” of the Hebrew:

(14a) GNB – Hamor said to him

This translation is problematic in light of the second-person plural forms within Hamor's speech (“your [plural] daughter,” “give [plural imperative] her”), which must refer to Jacob and his sons.

Shechem then speaks “to her father and to her brothers,” addressing the issue of the brideprice:

(15) Genesis 34:11

וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁכֶם אֶל־אָבִיהָ וְאֶל־אֶחָיו
אֲמַצְא־חַן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם וְאֲשֶׁר תֹּאמְרוּ אֵלַי אֲתֵן

Then Shechem *said* to her father and her brothers,

“May I find grace in your eyes and what you say to me, I will pay.”

The translations here are more interpretive:

(15a) CEV – Shechem added

By using the metapragmatic verb “added” the CEV implicitly acknowledges the adjacency pair structure at play in this verse. However, “added” also reduces the status of Shechem by seeing his father as the main protagonist. Furthermore, the fact that he spoke “to her father and to her brothers” is omitted by the CEV, although this is important metapragmatic information in the bargaining for the bride price. The Message maintains these metapragmatic features of the Hebrew by translating as follows:

(15b) Message – Shechem then spoke for himself, addressing Dinah’s father and brothers.

Jacob’s sons – not Jacob himself – respond to the overtures of Hamor and his son. The metapragmatic information introducing their speech is extremely detailed:

(16) Genesis 34:13–14

וַיַּעֲנוּ בְנֵי־יַעֲקֹב אֶת־שְׁכֶם וְאֶת־חָמוֹר אָבִיו בְּמַרְמָה
וַיִּדְבְּרוּ אֲשֶׁר טִמְא אֶת דִּינָה אֶחָתָם

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵיהֶם

לֹא נוּכַל לַעֲשׂוֹת הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה לְתַת אֶת־אֶחָתָנוּ לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ עֶרְלָה כִּי־חֲרָפָה הוּא לָנוּ

Jacob’s sons *answered* Shechem and his father Hamor *with deceit*.

They *spoke* because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

They *said* to them, “We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to a man who is uncircumcised, for that is a disgrace among us...”

The metapragmatic portrayal of the speech of Jacob’s sons as *בְּמַרְמָה* “with deceit” is handled in a variety of ways in the translation. The CEB uses the word “deviously,” the GNB uses “in a deceitful way”, and the Message uses “with cunning”:

- (16a) CEB – Jacob’s sons responded *deviously* to Shechem and his father Hamor because Shechem defiled their sister Dinah.
- (16b) GNB – Because Shechem had disgraced their sister Dinah, Jacob’s sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor *in a deceitful way*.
- (16c) Message – Jacob’s sons answered Shechem and his father *with cunning*. Their sister, after all, had been raped.

The CEV translates the Hebrew phrase “with deceit” twice, first by explicitizing their motive (“they wanted to get even”) and then by explicitizing that their deceit was successful (“they tricked them”):

- (16d) CEV – Jacob’s sons *wanted to get even* with Shechem and his father because of what had happened to their sister. So *they tricked* them by saying...

The sons of Jacob propose circumcision for Hamor and Shechem and all of their clan as a prerequisite to arranging the marriage. The reply to their proposal is represented indirectly with a descriptive statement:

- (17) Genesis 34:18

וַיִּטְבוּ דְבָרֵיהֶם בְּעֵינֵי חָמוֹר וּבְעֵינֵי אֶשְׁכֶם בֶּן־חָמוֹר

Their words pleased Hamor and Shechem son of Hamor.

The translations use a wide variety of strategies:

- (17a) CEV – Hamor and Shechem liked what was said
- (17b) CEB – Their idea seemed like a good one to Hamor and Hamor’s son Shechem
- (17c) GNB – These terms seemed fair to Hamor and his son Shechem
- (17d) Message – That seemed fair enough to Hamor and his son Shechem

Only the Inclusive Bible translates to make the structure of the dialogic adjacency pair explicit:

- (17d) Inclusive – Hamor and Shechem accepted the offer.

Hamor and Shechem then take the proposal of circumcision and intermarriage to their clan, where it was also accepted. On the third day after circumcision, the two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, attack and kill all of the males and taking away their sister Dinah from Shechem’s house. The other sons of Jacob then loot the town, taking women and children as plunder and all of the wealth of the town, before burning it to the ground.

The story ends with a dialogic adjacency pair between Jacob and Simeon and Levi, involving an accusation and a refusal to accept the accusation:

(18) Genesis 34:30–31

וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב אֶל־שִׁמְעוֹן וְאֶל־לֵוִי
 עֲכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי לְהַבְאִישְׁנִי בְיֶשֶׁב הָאָרֶץ בְּכֹנְעָנִי וּבַפְּרֹזִי וְאֲנִי מְתִי מִסֶּפֶר וְנֹאֲסָפוּ עָלַי
 וְהַכּוֹנֵי וְנִשְׁמְדֵתִי אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי
 וַיֹּאמְרוּ
 הַכּוֹזֵנָה יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־אָחוֹתֵנוּ

Jacob said to Simeon and Levi,

“You have brought trouble on me, making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites; my men are few in number, so that if they unite against me and attack me, I and my house will be destroyed.”

They said,

“Should he treat our sister like a whore?”

The quotative frame introducing the speech of Jacob is translated usually literally and uniformly. Some translations explicitly connect his speech with the actions of the brothers in the preceding verses:

(18a) TNIV – Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi

The reply by Simeon and Levi is often explicitised as an answer:

(18a) CEV – They *answered*, “Was it right to let our own sister be treated that way?”

(18b) GNB – but they *answered*, “We cannot let our sister be treated like a common whore.”

The Inclusive Bible again subtly explicitizes the metapragmatic features of the adjacency pair:

(18c) Inclusive – They *simply replied*: Should our sister be treated like a prostitute?

By translating the single-verb frame with the generic verb “say” with “reply,” the translation explicitizes the position of the speech in the quotative frame. By adding the adverb “simply,” the translation effectively highlights the quotation as an implicit retort to the father’s accusation.

Conclusions

We have seen that oral and written style are interwoven in the ways that speech and dialogue are metapragmatically represented in biblical narrative. Multiple-verb frames represent the “fossilized” remains of oral storytelling, whereas לֵאמֹר frames had their origins in scribal practice. Those who shaped the biblical narratives used both kinds of frames (in contrast to neutral single verb frames) as metapragmatic devices for the highlighting of dialogic and non-dialogic aspects of speech representations, respectively.

We looked at a selection of English translations of Genesis 34 and noted that while they sometimes explicitize the metapragmatic features of the speeches for their readers, in other cases, they are reticent to depart from a literal rendering. This seems unfortunate in the sense that the quotative frame which introduces direct speech provides an ideal locus for a translator to assist the reader by explicitizing those pragmatic features of the speech which may prove difficult or awkward. The quotative frame provides a venue for translator hermeneutics and interpretation concerning the purposive intent and pragmatic function of the speech which follows.

In this regard, the metapragmatic nature of the quotative frame functions in a way that is analogous to the metatexts of a translation, supplementary material added by a translator to frame a translation and to guide a reader’s expectations in the interpretation of a text (Naudé 2009, 2012). Metatexts can be used as a means of mediating between alternative interpretations of the text (Naudé 2013) or promote a particular interpretation of a text (Naudé and Miller-Naudé 2012). The difference lies in nature of the framing materials as part of the source text (the metapragmatic quotative frames) or the target text (the metatextual material). A survey of translations in Genesis 34 revealed that many translations tend to adjust the direct speech quotation itself rather than the quotative frame, which is often rendered in a rigidly literal fashion. By making greater use of the interpretive possibilities of the metapragmatic quotative frames, translators can provide readers with additional assistance in understanding the role and function of direct speech within the dialogue and its surrounding narrative. Furthermore, by guiding readers’ expectations concerning the quotation by means of the quotative frame, a translator can use the quotative in the same manner as a metatext, thus allowing the alterity of the direct quotation to shine through the translation into the target text.

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