

# Adventures in Translation into Creole Languages

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# Introduction

- *Cogli la prima mela.*
- “Pick the first apple.”
- But what does it *mean*?
- “You make the first move.”



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# What is translation?

- The rewriting of a Source Text
  - across a linguistic borderline
  - whereby a core of identical or equivalent features is preserved at some level (e.g. content, form, intention, effect)
  - enabling the Translated Text to function as a substitute for the Source Text.
- Definition of translation as a prototypical category provided by Dirk Delabastita
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# This definition implies...

- Each Translated Text derives exclusively from its Source Text (?)
  - No – each TT also must derive from the resources and sometimes world view of the target language and culture.
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# St. Lucian Creole proverb #1

- *Chat pa ka fè chyen.*
  - *“Cat doesn’t make dog.*
  - *“Cats don’t give birth to dogs.”*
  - *“Like father, like son.”*
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# St. Lucian Creole proverb #2

- *Ou wè i jòn, ou kwe i bè.*
  - “You see it is yellow, you think it is butter.”
  - “All that glitters is not gold.”
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# St. Lucian Creole proverb #3

- *Tout kochon ni sanmdi yo.*
  - “Every pig has its Saturday.”
  - “Every dog has its day” ?
  - No...
  - You have to understand that Saturday is the day for slaughtering in this culture.
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# What is meaning?

- An evasive concept in linguistics.
  - Problematic in translation as well.
  - Subjective: “Form is what we can change in translation, and meaning is what must not change.” (a very problematic viewpoint)
  - There are many different kinds of meanings at work in a text at the same time.
  - The translator’s job is to prioritize, and focus on certain types of meanings.
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# One way to determine meaning...

- This solution is circular, but it works for certain purposes.
  - When you have different expressions of the same text, meaning is what the different expressions have in common (and sometimes also what distinguishes them).
  - This way of finding meaning “works” if you have trust in the different expressions of the same text.
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Paratext 6

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A GUL - G HEB 1 Verse Number

(A) GUL HEB 1:1 (Editable)

1 Way back, plenty time an een plenty diffunt way, God beena taak ta we ole people shru de prophet dem. 2 Bot now wen de end time da come, God taak ta we shru e Son. An shru e Son, God mek de wol, an e pass ebryting ta e Son. 3 God Son, e de light wa da show we de bright glory ob God. Wen oona see de Son, oona da see God, cause de Son jes de same as God. An de Son wod wa got powa fa true, da mek all ting stay jes like dey spouse fa stay. An atta de Son done dead fa people sin, fa mek um clean een God eye, e gone ta heaben an seddown ta de right han side ob God, wa got mo powa den all.

God Son Way Mo High On Don de Angel Dem

(A) GRK HEB 1:1

1 Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας τοῖς πατέροις ἐν τοῖς προφήταις 2 ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων ἐλόλησεν ἡμῖν ἐν υἱῷ, ὃν ἔθηκεν

(A) RSV52 HEB 1:1

1 In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. 3 He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become

(A) SLC HEB 1:1

1 An tan lontan, Bondyé té palé bay gwan gwanpapa lontan nou. I té sèvi sé pwòfèt-la pou'y té ba yo konmisyon'y, èk i voyé konmisyon sala souvan épi an diféwan mannyè. 2 Mé an sé dènyé jou sala i ja sèvi Gason'y pou palé ban nou. Sé li Bondyé sèvi pou té fè tout bagay. Sé li Bondyé chwazi èk i passé tout bagay ba li. 3 An li nou ka wè klèté Bondyé, èk lè nou wè Gason-an, sé Bondyé menm nou wè. I ka tjenbé tout bagay

(A) KJV HEB 1:1

1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of [his] glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the

(A) NI984 HEB 1:1

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. 3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right

(A) HBK HEB 1:1

**Hebrews 1.1-3.**

In Greek, as in the King James Version (KJV) and the Zürcher Bibel (Zür), verses 1-4 form a single sentence. Most translations, with the exception of the common language translations (CLT), treat them as a separate paragraph or section. However, if a translation is not to be based on the grammatical structure

(A) GNT92 HEB 1:1

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, 2 \* but in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son. He is the one through whom God created the universe, the one whom God has chosen to possess all things at the end. 3 \* He reflects the brightness of God's glory and is the exact likeness of God's own being, sustaining the universe with his powerful word. After achieving

(A) NLT96 HEB 1:1

1 Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he made the universe and everything in it. 3 The Son reflects God's own glory, and everything about him represents God exactly. He sustains the universe by the mighty power of his command. After he

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# What is equivalence?

- A central concept in translation
  - ...but problematic.
  - Involves circular reasoning.
  - Equivalence defines translation, and translation defines equivalence (Pym).
  - Sometimes considered a “dirty word.”
  - Indispensable, however, in my view.
  - Many kinds of equivalence possible, all valid.
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# Skopos Theory

- Formulated by Hans Vermeer, late 1970s.
  - Functionally and socioculturally oriented.
  - *Skopos* = purpose (Greek)
  - Focus on the function of the translated text from the viewpoint of the intended audience.
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# Skopos Theory (continued)

Before translation begins...

- one must determine audience,
  - and the function of the text for their culture.
  - These factors determine translation methods and strategies.
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WE ARE SINCERELY  
BROILING FRESH MEETS  
USING SPECIAL 紀州備長炭  
DOOR IS ANYTIME OPEN FOR YOU 常時開業中

[www.english.com](http://www.english.com)

**当ビル以外の方  
ゴミ出し禁止！！**

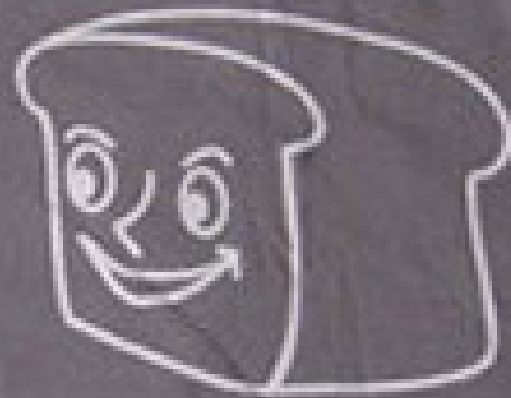
**It is directions garbage other than  
this building, and forbids!!**

**A fine is obtained when illegal  
abandonment is carried out!!**

[www.english.com](http://www.english.com)

Japanese text reads: “Do not throw garbage  
away here if you do not live in this building.”

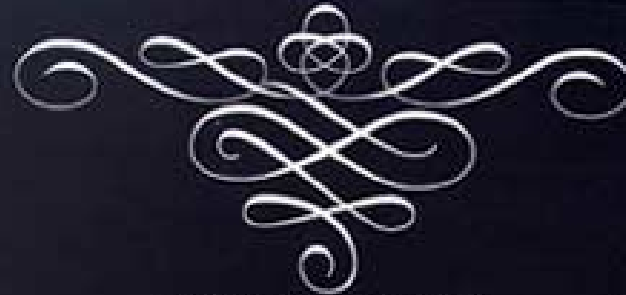
**Let's eat breakfast  
firmly  
If breakfast is said  
It is bread  
I am bread  
Well eat**



[www.english.com](http://www.english.com)

FAMILLE GRAND KOBE KITANO

# THE CLUBHOUSE



[www.english.com](http://www.english.com)

Please come to a horizontal  
selling center immediately.  
A model room is looking-got.

※We are very sorry, but our explanation is only in Japanese

すぐ横の販売センターへお越し下さい。  
モデルルームをご覧いただけます。

※ご説明・ご商談は日本語のみとなります。

- Please acknowledge it although it is very sorry, because only one of Japanese is asking to do the entrance store in our shop although I asked to come it to this special KING MOU.
- せっかく当キング・ムーにお越し頂きましたが、当店では日本人の方のみ入店して頂いておりますので、大変申し訳ございませんがどうぞご了承ください。

*King Mhu* キング・ムー 1F  
www.english.com

Japanese text reads: “Sorry, but no foreigners allowed in King Mhu.”

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# St. Lucian Creole example #1

- ‘birthright’ translated as *dwa* (lit. ‘rights’)
  - Creole translation said Esau traded his *dwa* for a bowl of porridge.
  - Made perfect sense to target audience.
  - Traded his *bedsheet* for a bowl of porridge.
  - Problem: *dwa* can mean ‘rights’ or ‘bedsheet’
  - Who ever heard of selling your rights?
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## St. Lucian Creole example #2

- ‘nature’ translated as *nati*
- Confusion in translation of 1 Corinthians 11:7.
- *An nonm pa ni pyès wézon pou kouvè tèt li, paski Bondyé ja fè’y menm kon i menm Bondyé yé, épi i ja ba li an nati ki menm kon sa li.*
- “A man does not have any reason to cover his head, because God has already made him just as he God is, and he has already given him a *nati* that is just like his own.”

(see [www.seaislandcreole.org/workpapers/Lexical.pdf](http://www.seaislandcreole.org/workpapers/Lexical.pdf), p. 8.)

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# Standards for scripture translation

We judge a translation as “good” if it is

- 1) clear,
- 2) accurate,
- 3) natural.

Perhaps it is also important to add

- 4) acceptable to the audience.
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# Standards for scripture translation

## Comment:

- These qualities constrain what we do,
  - but they do not mean that other translations are ‘bad.’
  - Revised Standard Version is not natural English and not so clear, but it is excellent for its purposes, i.e. certain kinds of study.
  - “Cotton Patch” gospels not historically accurate, but good for their purpose.
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# Methods in scripture translation

One must determine the audience and take into consideration their

- native forms,
  - world view, including beliefs and values,
  - comprehension of the text,
  - expectations for the translation.
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# Success in scripture translation

A translation can “succeed” if...

- the audience has trust in the translators,
  - the audience has trust in the method,
  - the product meets the standards and expectations of the audience.
  - (Note: People can change, and a translation can have a transforming effect on people in various ways, and a translation is not a slave to the norms of the audience.)
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# Signs of “success” in translation



St. Lucia's Minister of Culture  
and Religion

“What we are seeing today is of historical importance, and is also of Christian importance. Historical importance, linguistically-speaking, because we are seeing a language that was once seen as something that we should not respect come to full maturity on this particular occasion. If the New Testament can now be translated into Creole, then nothing can stop the onward march and progress of our Creole language, Patwa nou isi-a Sent Lisi. When we have the Bible now being translated into the language of the people, one cannot overstate the power and might that can emanate from such an exercise.”

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# Signs of “success” in translation



Dame Pearlette Louisy,  
Governor-General of St. Lucia

“Twaway-la sé sa nou,  
Tèstèman Nèf-la sé sa  
nou. Mwen ka envité tout  
moun pou anbwasé  
twaway sala.”

[The work is ours, the  
New Testament is ours. I  
invite everyone to  
embrace this work.]

# Signs of “success” in translation



Peter Samuel, translator

“Mwen sa di’w i té on bon pwivilaj pou mwen té sa twavay asou pwojé sala. Kwéyòl sé langaj nou. Ng’a wè Sent Lisi ka kopwann Kwéyòl pli mèyè pasé Anglé. Tout lè ou vlé moun kopwann ou ni pou sèvi Kwéyòl.”

[I can tell you it was a great privilege for me to be able to work on this project. Creole is our language. I can see that Saint Lucia understands Creole better than English. Any time you want people to understand you need to use Creole.]

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# Signs of “success” in translation



“This New Testament makes me feel very proud because we are saying to the people of the Creole culture that you are equal to everybody else. Your language is an acceptable language internationally.”

Director of St. Lucia's  
Folk Research Centre

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# Signs of “success” in translation



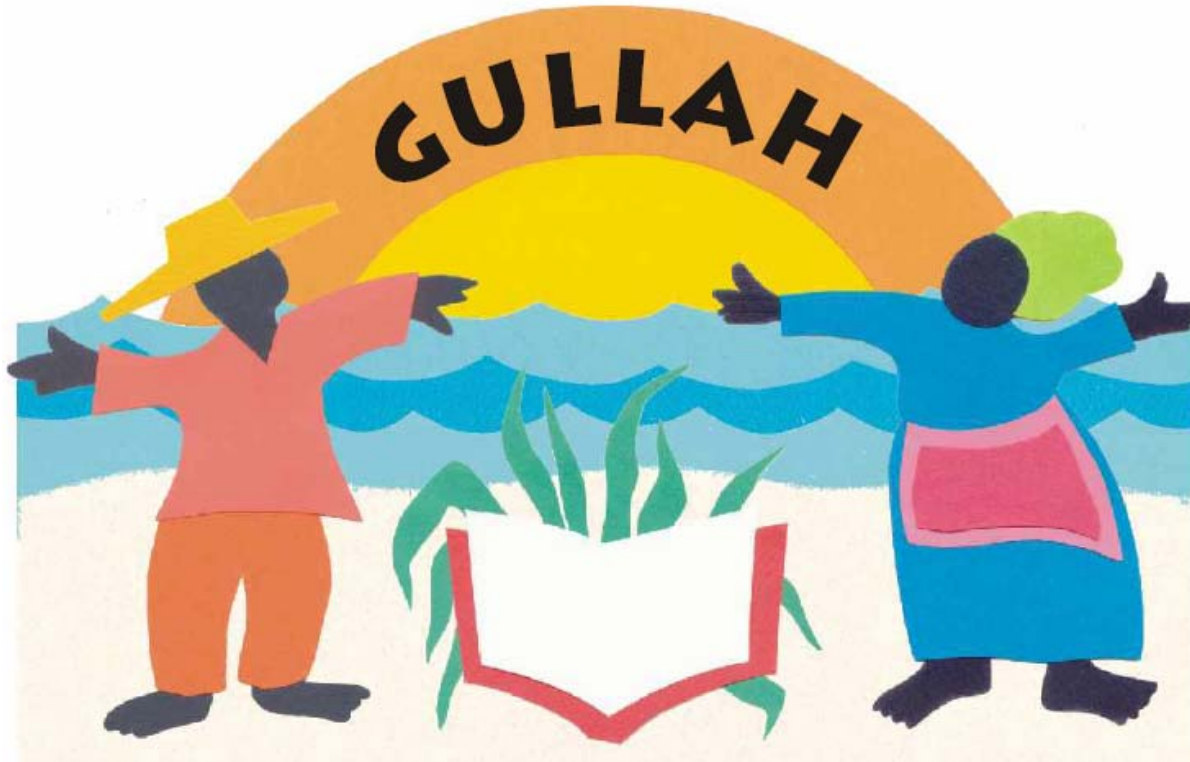
Llewellyn Xavier,  
artist

“I was given an advance copy of the New Testament, Tèstèman Nèf-la, and my wife, who is an Italian, does not speak nor does she understand Creole, and she read it to me, and I must tell you that it was the profoundest experience of my life, and I do not say this lightly, as I have had a lot of experiences. It really was the most profound experience I have had in my life, ever, to hear the Word of God being spoken in my own language.”

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For more information:



- [www.saintluciancreole.org](http://www.saintluciancreole.org)
  - [www.seaislandcreole.org](http://www.seaislandcreole.org)
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