BIBLICAL HEBREW IN CHINESE: FOSTERING THE RETHINKING OF TEACHING METHOD THROUGH LANGUAGE DEFAMILIARIZATION

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ABSTRACT

Most teaching of Biblical Hebrew in universities and seminaries proceeds along fairly predictable lines, closely approximating the venerable Grammar-Translation tradition of classical language instruction. While a few recent textbooks have departed from this well-travelled path by advancing more inductive and communicative approaches to language acquisition, both these newer instructional practices and the familiar older ones assume a specifically Euro-American cultural and linguistic instructional milieu. The present study examines the teaching of Biblical Hebrew in Chinese through the lens of language defamiliarization, not only highlighting linguistic and cultural factors that differ markedly from those of Western teaching traditions, but also drawing out principles of Biblical Hebrew instruction that are applicable to all teaching contexts.

LANGUAGE DEFAMILIARIZATION

"Why write yet another Hebrew textbook?" so opens "yet another" volume for use in teaching Biblical Hebrew. [1] The introduction of a still more recent textbook justifies its publication "despite the deluge of new Hebrew textbooks in recent years."[2] Implicitly assumed in remarks such as these is that the current embarrassment of riches in Biblical Hebrew teaching grammars pertains to those written in English. While elementary grammars certainly exist in other languages, many are translations from English. For example, Weingreen's *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew* has appeared in French, Czech, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese editions. [3] Regarding language of

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[1] Arthur Walker-Jones, *Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation*, Resources for Biblical Study 48 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 1.

[2] John A. Cook and Robert D. Holmstedt, *Beginning Biblical Hebrew: A Grammar and Illustrated Reader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 9.

[3] Jacob Weingreen, *Hébreu biblique: méthode élémentaire*, trans. Paul Hebert and Jean Margain (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984); ibid., *Učebnice biblické hebrejštiny*, trans. Josef Hermach and Mlada Mikulicová (Prague: Karolinum, 1997); ibid., *Hibeurieo munbeop*, trans. Ryu Keun-sang (Paju:

instruction, two factors contribute to the relative uniformity of Biblical Hebrew textbooks in the modern era: the preeminence of English in contemporary biblical studies, and the fact that other Indo-European instruction languages are structurally similar to English.[4]

Indo-European language dominance of the Biblical Hebrew teaching field suggests that the avenue of language "defamiliarization" holds promise for fostering the rethinking of basic pedagogical assumptions.[5] That is to say, the present study proposes that one way to set aside engrained ways of thinking about language teaching is to adopt an entirely fresh vantage point: that of explaining the grammar of Biblical Hebrew through the medium of a non-Indo-European language.

On one hand, Modern Hebrew might seem ideally suited to the task of approaching Biblical Hebrew from a non-Indo-European conceptual base.[6] Students whose native language is Modern Hebrew can receive Biblical Hebrew instruction in a completely different manner than speakers of English, French, or German can, for the living language of Modern Hebrew bears traces of its ancient heritage at all levels, from vocabulary to grammar to elements of syntax. On the other hand, it is precisely the "family resemblance" of the two varieties of Hebrew that disqualifies Modern Hebrew from effectively catalyzing language defamiliarization. In other words, while Modern Hebrew is indeed quite different from Indo-European languages, it is too similar to Biblical Hebrew (the learning objective) to stimulate extensive reevaluation of

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Keuriseuchyan, 2000); ibid., *Jissen kyūyaku heburugo bunpō*, trans. Nabetani Gyoji and Miyazaki Shigeru (Tokyo: Inochi no Kotobasha, 1996); ibid., *Shiyong Gudian Xibolaiwen Wenfa*, trans. Guo Rongmin (Tainan: Tainan Seminary Press, 1998). Weingreen's grammar is also available in a series of volumes in Braille. Online: http://bartimaeus.us/brl-hot.html (accessed June 15, 2016).

[4] Naudé and Miller-Naudé note the inadequacy of English and Afrikaans teaching grammars for the purpose of training Bible translators who work in African languages in Jacobus A. Naudé and Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé, "A New Biblical Hebrew Teaching Grammar for African Bible Translators: A Typological Approach," *OTE* 24 (2011): 690–707.

[5] "Defamiliarization" casts that which is familiar into a jarringly unconventional frame of reference, thus focusing attention and prompting comprehensive reevaluation of the newly-unfamiliar. See R.H. Stacy, *Defamiliarization in Language and Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977).

[6] An example of a textbook that moves in the opposite direction, building upon knowledge of Biblical Hebrew to aid the acquisition of Modern Hebrew reading ability, is Takamitsu Muraoka, *Modern Hebrew for Biblical Scholars: An Annotated Chrestomathy with an Outline Grammar and a Glossary*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998).

how to teach the subject to speakers of languages other than Modern Hebrew itself.[7]

WHY CHINESE?

While both Hebrew and Chinese share rootedness in deep antiquity, they stand in separate language families and have not significantly influenced each other through language contact in history. [8] Additionally, Hebrew and Chinese both markedly differ from English and other Indo-European languages. Greater differentiation heightens the effect of defamiliarization, so the distance of Chinese from both English and Biblical Hebrew renders it a fitting language through which to evaluate the teaching of Biblical Hebrew from a non-Indo-European perspective.

　Significantly facilitating this kind of analysis is the recent publication of several Biblical Hebrew teaching grammars in Chinese. Thus the immediately-following sections interact with three of these grammars that together manifest a range of approaches in adapting Biblical Hebrew teaching to the instructional context of the Chinese language. These sections also raise issues of Biblical Hebrew pedagogy encountered through language defamiliarization. The next section briefly treats the defamiliarized context one may encounter in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural teaching in order to maintain overall focus upon language defamiliarization specifically. A summarizing section then recapitulates the import of the present study by suggesting the usefulness of lessons from language defamiliarization in English and other language contexts, followed by a conclusion.

CHINESE TRANSLATION OF PRATICO AND VAN PELT

The first textbook under consideration is the Chinese edition of Pratico and Van Pelt's *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (2nd ed.), whose

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[7] Contrastive study of Biblical and Modern Hebrew can generate valuable insights regarding the modern language, but this is not the concern of the present study. See Haiim B. Rosén, *Contemporary Hebrew*, Trends in Linguistics 11 (The Hague: Mouton, 1977), 45 n. 34.

[8] Yiyi Chen, "China," in *Encyclopedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics*, 4 vols., ed. Geoffrey Khan (Boston: Brill, 2013), 1:425–428, esp. 425. A fascinating study of the gradual Sinicization of the language of Jews in Kaifeng appears in Paul Wexler, "Jewish Languages in Kaifeng, Henan Province, China (1163–1933)," *ZDMG* 135 (1985): 330–347.

rigidly literalistic translational philosophy essentially clothes an English textbook in Chinese dress. For example, just as in the original volume, introduction of the *qatal* verb conjugation employs English tenses as a means of explaining verb function and provides English translational equivalents for Hebrew verbs. Accompanying text translates these English illustrations into Chinese.[9] Students who would most benefit from this textbook are those who are fluent in English and thoroughly familiar with English grammar. However, since such students would likely also be able to read *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* in its original English, the ultimate usefulness of the Chinese edition is debatable.

Even so, tense-centered treatment of the *qatal* verb conjugation in the Chinese translation of Pratico/Van Pelt prompts reflection on how best to explain elements of Hebrew grammar *in* a given instructional language *through* pragmatic pedagogy *without* sacrificing theoretical accuracy. [10] Regarding pragmatism, meaningful description of verb function in the English-language instructional setting mandates the use of tenses, for English is a tense-prominent language. As for accuracy, teaching *qatal* and *yiqtol* as an aspectual opposition requires a further layer of explanation in order to counter a natural learner's tendency to assign the meanings of the English past and future tenses to *qatal* and *yiqtol*, respectively. The fact that English partly embeds aspect within a system of perfect *tenses* only complicates the task of teaching aspect in English language contexts.[11]

Ideally – unlike in the Chinese translation of *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* – the Chinese-language instructional context should lead to a completely different approach to teaching aspect in Biblical Hebrew. While English verbs conjugate according to tense, verbs in Chinese lack inflection altogether. Indeed, Chinese verbs neither encode tense, nor aspect, nor modality or – for that matter – any person, gender, or number information. Generally speaking, the lack of verb

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[9] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Shengjing Xibolaiwen Chujie*, trans. Jiang Jizhen and Tian Songen (Taipei: China Evangelical Seminary Press, 2009), 146.

[10] Cook critiques pragmatic but linguistically-inaccurate teaching approaches to *wayyiqtol* and *weqatal* verbs in John A. Cook, "The *Vav*-Prefixed Verb Forms in Elementary Hebrew Grammar," *JHS* 8 (2008): 1–16.

[11] Richard Xiao and Tony McEnery, *Corpus-Based Contrastive Studies of English and Chinese*, Routledge Advances in Corpus Linguistics 11 (New York: Routledge, 2010), 11–23.

conjugation in Chinese can render teaching elements of the Hebrew verbal system especially difficult.

Yet in the specific case of teaching perfective and imperfective viewpoint aspect in the *qatal* and *yiqtol* verb forms, it is relevant to note that in contrast with English, Chinese is an aspect-prominent language.[12] Therefore, teaching the *qatal/yiqtol* opposition through the medium of Chinese actually has the potential to be simpler and more direct than in English, for aspectual analysis of verb information is native to the Chinese language system. Needless to say, mastery of the foreign English tense-based verbal system should not be a prerequisite to learning the aspectual theory of the *qatal* and *yiqtol* verb conjugations for Chinese-speaking students.

CHINESE ADAPTATION OF SEOW

Another textbook that has recently appeared in Chinese translation is the revised edition of Choon Leong Seow's *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*. Unlike Pratico and Van Pelt's elementary grammar, this work contains many adaptations to the Chinese language context interspersed with direct translation.[13] While sequencing of lessons is identical to that in the English source document, the translator-editors modified material that would have held little explanatory value in literal Chinese translation. Thus the Chinese edition of the Seow grammar does not introduce the *qatal* verb by means of tenses, as in the original English volume. Instead, the translators of the Seow grammar focus upon the various aspect-related meanings that the *qatal* conjugation conveys.[14]

This shift of description from form to meaning is possible because Biblical Hebrew and Chinese share the concept of aspect within an

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[12] Chinese uses aspect particles, verb reduplication, and resultative and directional verb complements to convey aspectual information with default temporal references. See Richard Xiao and Tony McEnery, *Aspect in Mandarin Chinese: A Corpus-Based Study*, Studies in Language Companion Series 73 (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2004), 89–244; Carlota S. Smith and Mary S. Erbaugh, "Temporal Interpretation in Mandarin Chinese," in *Text, Time, and Context: Selected Papers of Carlota S. Smith*, Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy 87, ed. Richard P. Meier, Helen Aristar-Day, and Emilie Destruel (New York: Springer, 2009), 303–342, esp. 315–320; Toshikazu S. Foley, *Biblical Translation in Chinese and Greek: Verbal Aspect in Theory and Practice*, Linguistic Biblical Studies 1 (Boston: Brill, 2009), 102–124.

[13] Choon Leong Seow, *Xibolaiwen [Shengjing] Yufa Jiaocheng*, trans. Ingvar Fløysvik and Lu Sihao (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2007). Fløysvik describes these adaptations as "slight revisions" (略作修正) in the translators' preface on p. 1.

[14] Ibid., 127–128.

overall orientation toward aspect prominence. One could label this instructional approach teaching by *analogy*.

Yet, there remains the problem of how to teach Biblical Hebrew grammatical features for which analogous features in Chinese do not exist. The translators adopt two strategies for teaching grammatical features that resist simple explication through *analogy*: teaching by *substitution* and teaching by *functional description*.

Teaching by *substitution* works best when a certain Biblical Hebrew grammatical feature does not exist in Chinese, but Chinese employs some discrete grammatical means to convey a similar meaning. This situation pertains for the relative pronoun אשר. While English relative pronouns (who/whom, which, that) perform essentially the same grammatical function as אשר within an information structure similar to that of Biblical Hebrew relative clauses, Chinese lacks relative pronouns. In order to express the idea conveyed in a relative clause, Chinese instead uses modifier phrases placed before the nouns they modify. To illustrate, the first half of direct discourse in Gen 3:12 (האשה אשר נתתה עמדי) straightforwardly reads "the woman *whom* you put beside me" in English translation. [15] In contrast, the Chinese translation must place the relative clause before rather than after the noun, something like "the 'you put beside me' woman."[16] There is no word in the Chinese text that corresponds to אשר in Hebrew and *whom* in English. In place of the English relative clause construction, the Chinese translation of the Seow grammar substitutes the Chinese "modifier phrase-noun" construction: a *substitution* that accurately and effectively conveys the meaning of the Biblical Hebrew relative clause.

Teaching by *functional description* is necessary when a certain Biblical Hebrew grammatical feature not only does not exist in Chinese, but also no single grammatical means is available in Chinese to convey a similar meaning. This situation pertains for the Hebrew article ה. In the original English textbook, Seow tacitly defines the meaning of the Hebrew article as identical to the English definite article "the."[17] A teaching approach like this is impossible in the Chinese-language

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[15] Choon Leong Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 106.

[16] Seow, *Xibolaiwen [Shengjing] Yufa Jiaocheng*, 93. The Chinese text is 你放在我旁边与我一起的女人. This English translation is merely for illustration of Chinese relative clause information structure. There is no definite article "the" in Chinese, an issue the following text raises.

[17] Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 54–55. Seow also notes a rare vocative meaning.

setting, for Chinese lacks articles. In fact, the understanding and proper use of articles rank among the foremost challenges for Chinese learners of English.[18]

Regarding the article in Biblical Hebrew, the Chinese adaptation of the Seow grammar describes its function as "specifying," noting that common devices of expressing specificity in Chinese include literary context and speaker-selected means that may not manifest in sentence syntax such as shared knowledge of speaker and hearer.[19] While the Chinese translation of Seow relies first on teaching the Hebrew article through such use of *functional description*, it also ventures translational equivalents that employ teaching by *substitution*. That is to say, the grammar translates the indefinite and definite noun states respectively as מלך = "king, one king" and המלך = "(this, that) king."[20] These *substitutions* are convenient yet problematic, for Chinese demonstratives also translate the Hebrew demonstratives זה/זאת/אלה.

Merging the translational equivalents of definite articles and demonstratives into one Chinese form can lead to confusion when both definite-state nouns and demonstratives appear in close proximity, as in זאת האשה, "*this* is *the* woman." The translators provide a Chinese expression for this clause that instead carries the doubly-demonstrative meaning "*this* is *that* woman."[21]

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[18] Moreover, research on English article acquisition indicates that among all articular concepts, the definite article is the most difficult for Chinese learners to grasp. That is to say, frequency of definite article misuse is greater than for both the indefinite article (a/an) and the zero or null article (a designation for grammatical non-use of articles before nouns). See María Belén Díez-Bedmar and Szilvia Papp, "The Use of the English Article System by Chinese and Spanish Learners," in Gaëtanelle Gilquin, Szilvia Papp, and María Belén Díez-Bedmar, eds., *Linking Up Contrastive and Learner Corpus Research* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 147–175, esp. 163.

[19] The notions of "specific reference" and "hearer knowledge" are parameters that frequently appear in research upon Chinese learners' acquisition of definite articles. See for example Bee Eng Wong and Soh Theng Quek, "Acquisition of the English Definite Article by Chinese and Malay ESL Learners," *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching* 4 (2007): 210–234.

[20] Seow, *Xibolaiwen [Shengjing] Yufa Jiaocheng*, 48–49. The original Chinese equivalents are מלך = 王, 一位王 and המלך = (这, 那) 王.

[21] Ibid., 91–92. The Chinese text is 这是那女人. Robertson identifies this *substitution*-driven pitfall in the acquisition of articles by Chinese learners as the "lexical transfer principle." See Daniel Robertson, "Variability in the Use of the English Article System by Chinese Learners of English," *Second Language Research* 16 (2000): 135–172.

A FULLY CHINESE GRAMMAR OF BIBLICAL HEBREW

The final textbook examined for the purpose of drawing lessons from language defamiliarization is *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng.*[22] In some respects a direct comparison with the two previously-discussed grammars is not altogether fitting, in that Pratico/Van Pelt on one hand and Seow on the other both fall under the classical Western Grammar-Translation tradition of Biblical Hebrew instruction, while *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* does not. Instead this recent work draws heavily from second language acquisition theory and completely reimagines teaching Biblical Hebrew within the learning context of mainland China. In contrast to the heavily deductive presentation of lessons in the style of Grammar-Translation, students instead encounter a multi-sensory communicative method, seasoned with both inductive and deductive pedagogical influences. Thus *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* stresses listening, speaking, and writing as indispensable practices for facilitating the acquisition of reading skill.[23]

Unconstrained by a tense-based template like the Seow grammar, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* explains the *qatal* through *functional description* rather than by *analogy*. Essentially, the *qatal* conjugation expresses completed action except for some verbs that typically communicate ongoing mental or emotional status. This rather simple explanation never broaches the subject of aspect and thus provides a less comprehensive explanation than the Seow grammar. However, more inductive and communicative teaching approaches usually do not attempt intensive serial explanation of grammatical concepts, but rather use a layered presentation that cycles through various topics with ever-increasing complexity. Accordingly, the very basic conjugation chart accompanying the introduction of the *qatal* omits plural verb forms. In apparent contrast with this element of simplicity, the chart not only lists

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[22] Xishui Writing Group, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng*, 3 vols. (Chengdu: Sichuan University Press, 2006–2009).

[23] Xishui Writing Group, 1:vii, 53. Critiquing at length the suitability of communicative methods for teaching a language no longer used for communication is beyond the scope of the present study. At minimum, teachers of Biblical Hebrew should take into account that the received corpus of Biblical Hebrew is a "language fragment," a specialized and somewhat standardized subset of an ancient language. See Edward Ullendorff, "Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?" *BSOAS* 34 (1971): 241–255.

conjugated forms of the strong verb שמר, but also the frequently-encountered weak verbs ידע, אכל, and ברא.[24]

Like the Seow grammar, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* primarily uses *functional description* to teach the Hebrew article. Nouns with articles designate unique entities like השמש "the sun," generalized concepts that do not point to any particular concrete referent like some uses of הים "the sea," single-member sets like "the door" of a single-door house, something previously known to the hearer/reader, or the one item of its kind in view (as in קח את־הדג "take the fish"). The grammar goes on to explain the notion that proper nouns are inherently definite. Accompanying these prototypical examples of definiteness in Hebrew is the previously-discussed translational *substitution* of the Chinese demonstrative pronoun for the Hebrew article.[25] As for teaching methods beyond *functional description* and *substitution*, the unique contribution of communicative exercises in *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* is *use in linguistic context*. Since the linguistic context is that of Biblical Hebrew rather than Chinese, these exercises at least partially compensate for the problems generated by imperfect translational *substitution.*

It is difficult to overstate the degree to which the design of *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* contextualizes to Chinese linguistic concepts and the learning needs of mainland Chinese students. A key example of accommodation to the Chinese language setting is the *substitution* of single Chinese characters to serve as "names" for every Hebrew consonant, vowel marking, and grammatical feature. Thus א is 阿 (*ā*), ב is 贝 (*bèi*), and so forth. This practice aligns with the Chinese instinct that the fundamental unit of language is the single-syllable Chinese character, and also allows for the formation of mnemonics similar to the well-known *begadkefat* designating the letters that can take a *dagesh lene*.[26] Vowel markings also carry Chinese titles that evoke their

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[24] Xishui Writing Group, 1:64. This is at an early stage, before explicit discussion of strong versus weak verbs.

[25] Ibid., 1:91.

[26] Ibid., 1:4–13. The Chinese version of *begadkefat* is the nonsense phrase 贝格达 • 喀佩塔 (*bèigédá kāpèitǎ*). Students gradually learn the Hebrew names for consonants and vowels throughout the course rather than in an intensive period at the beginning, enabling rapid progress to other material.

written form, so that *hireq*, *tsere*, and *segol* are the "one dot," "two dot," and "three dot" marks respectively.[27]

Communicative approaches to language acquisition often introduce new language concepts inductively in context before offering deductive explanation, and this is certainly true of *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng*. Even though communicative exercises inevitably produce "inauthentic" (that is, non-biblical) text, a positive aspect of willingness to interact with as-yet unexplained elements of language is freedom to engage more "authentic" (biblical) text at length and at relatively early stages in the course. For example, by the end of the first volume of *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng*, students will have learned most of the vocabulary and the majority of the morphological, grammatical, and even some of the syntactical features of Gen 1:1-2:3 in order to read this text. Even so, coverage is not exhaustive. Thus the word מרחפת (a *Piel* participle) from Gen 1:2 appears already in Lesson 9, though student understanding of the verbal system by this point only includes *qatal* and *wayyiqtol* verbs in their *Qal* forms. In fact, students do not encounter explicit teaching upon the participle and the *Piel binyan* until Lesson 25 in volume 2 and Lesson 44 in volume 3 respectively. Yet an outline of the Hebrew *binyan* system including the full set of its possible conjugations appears already in Lesson 9 with מרחפת, along with memory expressions that list them by their one-character Chinese names for use in advance of future learning.

As students' command of Biblical Hebrew grammar broadens, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* delves into deeper levels of grammatical detail, such as the minor derived *binyanim* and Masoretic accents. Simultaneously, pictures with Hebrew captions, songs with lyrics drawn from biblical text, continuing readings from Genesis, and lengthy biblical text samples outside of Genesis together construct a positive feedback loop of "comprehensible input" for language acquisition. [28] Learners with eyes to see may discern that the

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[27] Ibid., 1:13. Further, the three-dot *qibbuts* is 斜点符号, a "slanted dots mark." Incidentally, naming vowels according to dot placement revives a Masoretic practice. See Israel Yeivin, *Introduction to the Tiberian Masorah*, trans. and ed. E.J. Revell, The Society of Biblical Literature Masoretic Studies 5 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1980), 80. The author thanks David Marcus for this observation.

[28] The "Comprehensible Input Hypothesis" in second language acquisition holds that the most effective paths toward second language acquisition maximize exposure to understandable, authentic second language input (through listening and reading) that captures the interest of

orchestration of biblical text selections in volume 3 plays out in a kind of theological crescendo, and an exercise on the final page incorporating 88 biblical titles for God serves as the course's finale.[29]

By any measure, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* is a monumental accomplishment. The grammar employs innovative instructional techniques grounded in second language acquisition theory to convey a significant body of learning that exceeds typical expectations of breadth and depth in elementary Biblical Hebrew courses. The appendices of the three volumes contain a wealth of information beyond the expected exhaustive paradigm charts, including two-way Chinese-Hebrew glossaries as well as categorized Chinese-English glossaries to facilitate Chinese and English-language collaboration in Hebrew scholarship.[30] Perhaps the field of Biblical Hebrew instruction could even receive lively stimulus from a translation of *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* into English, with all of the effects of language defamiliarization laid bare before its new readers.

A Note on Communicative Language Acquisition and Language (and Culture) Defamiliarization

Before applying lessons from the above discussion to non-Chinese language teaching contexts, it is helpful to pause in order to touch upon cultural implications of a central premise: that defamiliarization enables rethinking of that which is familiar by shifting to an altogether fresh frame of reference. Indeed, teaching Biblical Hebrew through communicative, inductive, and activity-based methods in a Western cultural setting may defamiliarize teaching method for many teachers, for very few professors received their own ancient language training this way. For the Western teacher, valuable new pedagogical insights can then follow from defamiliarizing Biblical Hebrew instruction through adoption of less deductive teaching methods.

That said, venturing across linguistic boundaries to teach speakers of different languages normally requires teachers to bridge concomitant cultural divides, for language and culture link tightly together.

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students within a low-stress environment. See Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (New York: Pergamon, 1982).

[29] Xishui Writing Group, 3:217.

[30] Xishui Writing Group, 1:280–295. The Chinese-English terminological glossary is even sufficiently encyclopedic that it lists names of luminaries in the history of Hebrew linguistics such as Gesenius 格泽尼乌斯 (*Gézéníwūsī*) and Eliezer Ben-Yehuda 本－耶胡达 (*Běn-Yéhúdá*).

Recognition of the cultural embeddedness of language should check the uncritical adoption of teaching methods that "work" in a Western setting but that may function differently in non-Western practice. Indeed, culturally-based attitudes towards teaching methodology may not differ merely in degree, but can even approach diametric opposition. For example, mainstream Western academic works are essentially dismissive of the Grammar-Translation approach typified by the Pratico/Van Pelt and Seow teaching grammars, employing words such as "agonizing" and "tedious" to describe students' learning experience.[31] Yet perhaps surprisingly, non-Western evaluation of explicit, direct, deductive grammar instruction is instead contrastingly positive, even to the point of describing Grammar-Translation as "indispensable."[32] Contrary to common Western predispositions, in extreme cases non-Westerners may view more communicative instructional approaches (such as those of *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng*) as evidence of linguistic imperialism: an asserted "correct" teaching philosophy that one must accept without due regard for cultural norms that vary from those of the West.[33] In order to focus upon lessons learned from language defamiliarization in the three surveyed Chinese-language teaching grammars, the present study sets aside the vexed question of how to determine the proper mix of deductive and non-deductive approaches within one's teaching strategy in a particular socio-linguistic setting.

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[31] Edward M. Anthony and William E. Norris, "Method in Language Teaching," ERIC Focus Reports on the Teaching of Foreign Languages 8 (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1969), 4; Jack C. Richards and Theodore S. Rodgers, *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 6–7.

[32] Xiao Hui, "The Indispensable Role of the Grammar-Translation Method in Modern Foreign Language Teaching and Learning–Empirical Analyses," *CELEA Journal* 27 (2004): 116–119. For a non-Western perspective on learning see Zhenhui Rao, "Understanding Chinese Students' Use of Language Learning Strategies from Cultural and Educational Perspectives," *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 27 (2006): 491–508. For a non-Western perspective on teaching see Raqib Chowdhury and Phan Le Ha, "Reflecting on Western TESOL Training and Communicative Language Teaching: Bangladeshi Teachers' Voices," in *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 28 (2008): 305–316.

[33] Khoa Anh Viet, "Imperialism of Communicative Language Teaching and Possible Resistance against It from Teachers in Vietnam as an English Foreign Languages Context," *VNU Journal of Science, Foreign Languages* 24 (2008): 167–174.

REFLECTION ON LESSONS FROM LANGUAGE DEFAMILIARIZATION

Returning primary attention to language, one may recall that the present study isolates four strategies that Chinese translators and authors use to teach Hebrew grammatical concepts: *functional description*, *substitution*, *analogy*, and *use in linguistic context*. These strategies are most useful when elements of grammar in Biblical Hebrew do not align closely in meaning with similar expressions in the language of instruction. Thus recourse to these strategies is not particularly urgent in an English-language classroom when teaching the Hebrew article, for the Hebrew article and the English definite article are not only the same grammatical category, but also overlap significantly in meaning.[34] Conversely, a Hebrew grammatical concept that lacks a direct parallel in the language of instruction calls for creative use of one or more of the four strategies to teach the concept within a given modern language setting.

Functional description is somewhat of a default approach within teaching grammars of Biblical Hebrew, and it is perhaps the very purpose of reference grammars: to use the medium of the reader's language to explain the function of elements of Biblical Hebrew grammar. Despite the ubiquity of *functional description*, this common teaching method actually offers the least assistance to the student. *Functional description* holds Biblical Hebrew at an arm's length of abstraction, so to speak, rather than drawing it closer through use of anchoring concepts within the student's own language. Now in the end, there may be no such points of contact that a teacher can exploit, as in the case of the *binyan* system of Hebrew. While the *binyan* system is a shared characteristic of Semitic languages, there is nothing remotely similar in English, or in Chinese for that matter.[35] Even so, the *binyan*

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[34] Even in cases of significant overlap in meaning and function, it is important to remember that no features in languages of instruction precisely mirror similar features in Biblical Hebrew, in that the semantic and syntactical logic of each language differs. Thus the concepts of definiteness of nouns in English and Biblical Hebrew are not exactly the same. See Peter Bekins, "Non-Prototypical Uses of the Definite Article in Biblical Hebrew," *JSS* 63 (2013): 225–240.

[35] Sabatino Moscati et al., *An Introduction to the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages: Phonology and Morphology*, PLO n.s. 6 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1980), 122-130. Apparently a number of (non-Semitic) African languages modify verbs with affixes that carry *binyan*-like themes of meaning. See Elewani Bethuel Farisani, "African Indigenous Languages and the Teaching and Learning of Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 9 (2006): 52–55, esp. 53–54.

system is the means through which Biblical Hebrew communicates passive voice, which is a feature common to English, Chinese, and many of the world's languages.[36] Mention of passive voice should therefore appear early in any *functional description* of Hebrew *binyanim* if the language of instruction has passive voice. Mercifully, many features of Biblical Hebrew grammar are not as alien to speakers of English or Chinese and other [non-Semitic] instructional languages as the *binyan* system may be. In these cases, teachers should build upon a foundation of *functional description* by employing further strategies of *substitution*, *analogy*, and *use in linguistic context* to elucidate points of Biblical Hebrew grammar.

Substitution serves well when there is some structure in the language of instruction that does not derive from the same grammatical category but still approximates some Hebrew language structure. An English example is the *substitution* of quotation marks for the direct discourse marker לאמר.[37] Yet whenever teachers employ a ready *substitution* such as this, it may be helpful to remind students that no one-for-one cross-linguistic *substitution* perfectly conveys totality of meaning. That is to say, the direct discourse marker לאמר is not identical to an English quotation mark. Brief discussion on the introductory clause of Gen 2:16, ויצו יהוה אלהים על־האדם לאמר, may illustrate this point. Using the word "saying" to render the direct discourse marker לאמר can generate a translation like "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying."[38] While this clause is grammatically acceptable in English, the idea of speech is already present in "commanded," resulting in a somewhat unnatural redundancy. A "quotation mark" translation of לאמר removes this redundancy. Yet, in other languages, such as Chinese, use of two

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[36] Some languages lack passive voice. See Edward L. Keenan and Matthew S. Dryer, "Passive in the World's Languages," in Timothy Shopen, ed., *Language Typology and Syntactic Description*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1:325–361, esp. 329. Apparently the challenge of teaching the Hebrew *binyan* system is particularly acute in Melanesia, where passive voice is absent in 228 out of 230 Oceanic languages spoken there (including Tok Pisin, the official language of Papua New Guinea). See Phil King, "Linguistic Reflections on Teaching Hebrew in a Melanesian Context," *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia* 30/2 (2012): 8–30, esp. 12, 15-16.

[37] Page H. Kelley, *Biblical Hebrew: An Introductory Grammar* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1992), 182.

[38] This is the JPS (1985) translation. Incidentally, the Septuagint also reflects this literalistic translation strategy, rendering לאמר as λέγων.

verbs of speech is actually more natural than reducing לאמר to the status of punctuation.[39]

With *analogy* a teacher can explain a Biblical Hebrew linguistic structure that may be absent in the language of instruction through a concept (not a discrete structure) that is present in some way. Seow's teaching grammar draws upon the aspect-prominence of Chinese to teach the aspect-related meaning of the *qatal* verb conjugation by *analogy*. Even for grammatical concepts traditionally explained by *substitution*, complementary use of *analogy* may help clarify explanations for students. An illustration of the value of *analogy* lies in explanation of the paronomastic use of the Biblical Hebrew infinitive absolute. *Substitution* of an adverb of certainty seemingly explains the familiar construction מות תמות "you shall surely die" well. Yet there are plenty of paronomastic infinitive constructions in the Hebrew Bible for which literary context does not permit a meaning of epistemic "certainty," such as use in commands in concert with imperatives. Other *substitutions* like "you must!" with commands seem to provide a rather *ad hoc* translation for these infinitive absolutes, and unwieldy lists of *substitutions* accompanied by *functional descriptions* inevitably result.[40] Yet a simpler, concept-level *analogy* draws upon the language concepts of verb focus and modality. Verb focus directs reader or listener attention upon the verb in an utterance, and modality concerns any degree of potential or illocutionary force associated with the verbal action. Thus verbal intonation and use of bold type in print (as in "you **shall surely die!**") can convey the meaning of the paronomastic infinitive construction in English. [41]

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[39] See for example the Chinese Union Version (和合本) translation of 1919: 耶和华神吩咐他说. Here there is both the verb of command 吩咐 and of speech 说. Recent translations are similar, such as the Chinese Contemporary Bible (当代译本) of 2010.

[40] See for example Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 250–251; ibid., *Xibolaiwen [Shengjing] Yufa Jiaocheng*, 215–217. Characteristically, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* supplies a mnemonic device to enable recall of a list of infinitive absolute uses. See Xishui Writing Group, 2:185.

[41] On verb focus and the infinitive absolute see Walter Groß, *Die Satzteilfolge im Verbalsatz alttestamentlicher Prosa: Untersucht an den Büchern Dtn, Ri und 2Kön*, FAT 17 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 85, 146 n. 12, 162, 228-229. For a detailed exploration of the interaction between the infinitive absolute and modality, see Scott N. Callaham, *Modality and the Biblical Hebrew Infinitive Absolute*, AKM 71 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010). Friedman advocates italics for translating the paronomastic infinitive construction in Richard Elliott Friedman, "He Shall Surely Die: Translating the Emphatic in Biblical Hebrew" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, Ga., November 22, 2003).

Both the Seow grammar and *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* effectively employ *use in linguistic context*. The ideal linguistic context is that of the Hebrew Bible, because biblical text is "authentic" Biblical Hebrew by definition. Yet immediate immersion into Biblical Hebrew text is of little help to beginners – the students who use teaching grammars – because it is not yet a form of comprehensible language input. Thus Seow only introduces paragraph-length translation exercises after training students to use a dictionary.[42] Yet problematically, there are no Biblical Hebrew lexica in Chinese other than textbook glossaries. For this reason and likely others, *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* selects a different means of providing linguistic context. From the very first lesson, vocabulary contains not only isolated words but full sentences. As mentioned previously, the disadvantage of this practice is the use of "inauthentic" (that is, non-biblical) text to enable communicative use of the language, as well as exceedingly rare biblical words like עט ("iron stylus") that in Modern Hebrew now denotes an item found in every classroom: a "pen." Fuller discussion of *use in linguistic context* would require revisiting the question of the appropriateness of communicative language acquisition methods in a given instructional setting, which exceeds the scope of this study. Yet despite varying approaches toward *use in linguistic context*, both the Seow grammar and *Gu Xibolaiyu Jiaocheng* advance toward the same goal: the interpretation of the text of the Hebrew Bible. With or without the aid of the textbooks reviewed in this essay, and in whatever linguistic and cultural context in which they may find themselves, teachers should keep this objective of biblical interpretation foremost in mind.

CONCLUSION

The present study critically reviews three Chinese-language teaching grammars of Biblical Hebrew in an exercise of language defamiliarization. Since Biblical Hebrew, Chinese, and Indo-European languages like English are all quite different from each other, Chinese translators and authors often must teach Biblical Hebrew grammatical concepts differently from familiar English-based approaches. The study discerns the Chinese teaching grammars' use of teaching by *functional description*, *substitution*, *analogy*, and *use in linguistic context*.

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[42] Seow, *A Grammar for Biblical Hebrew*, 46–52; ibid., *Xibolaiwen [Shengjing] Yufa Jiaocheng*, 41–46.

Afterward appears a brief review of these methods that suggestively demonstrates the value of intentional integration of the four above-mentioned approaches into all aspects of one's teaching, especially in ways not commonly seen in contemporary teaching grammars of Biblical Hebrew. Reconsidering one's teaching afresh in this way holds promise for striking an elusive balance: explaining elements of Hebrew grammar *in* a given instructional language *through* pragmatic pedagogy *without* sacrificing theoretical accuracy.