Political Correctness and Nondiscriminatory or Inclusive Language
– Examples, Justification and Open Questions in Translation –

Eberhard Werner

Abstract
Political Correctness, as a metaphor, describes specific linguistic use or a vocabulary that is widely acceptable in a society, a speech community, a microculture (subculture) or a peer group. It serves an audience orientation, avoiding bad language. Nondiscriminatory or inclusive language [German: gerechte Sprache] serves an ideological concept of the same societal-linguistic groups. The underlying assumptions of nondiscriminatory or inclusive language develop from an attitude of correcting mistakes or bringing in new ideas. Both concepts are oriented towards conflict avoidance. They are restrictive to the speaker in effect, but audience-widening in orientation. Basic is the idea of the inclusion of a wider audience. At the same time, they are exclusive by limited use of linguistic variation to the speaker. Whereas political correctness is aimed at recent political developments (e.g. racist sentiments) and can be overcome very fast, nondiscriminatory or inclusive language aims instead at the long-term shift of language and thought (e.g. gender-neutral expressions). Both communicative strategies have things in common regarding their aim of serving a wider community, but they also differ in their attitude and their realisation. What the aim, the orientation, is, as well as where there is common ground and dissimilarity, is explored in this article. The effect on revisions of existing Bible translations as well as the impact of both communicative concepts on the task of Bible translation will also be discussed.

1. Framing Political Correctness and Nondiscriminatory Language

Political correctness is a defensive communicative strategy to avoid offensive language. It is defined as language that eludes disadvantage (discrimination) of members of specific groups in society. It is invented to avoid ‘no-go’ or ‘bad’ language (e.g. racist), and ‘taboo’ (e.g. anti-Christian) or ‘anti-’ terminology (e.g. anti-Semitic/ anti-Jewish, anti-nationalist). As such the term is culturally and linguistically coined by the sometimes temporary, sometimes unique, restrictions every society gives to it. Temporary use, for instance, is found in
youth language that aims at bad sexual vocabulary (‘fuck’, ‘dick’, ‘slut’ etc.; German: ‘schwul’, ‘affen-geil’, ‘Arsch’ etc.). However, some of the banned vocabulary soon became popular not just in the arts. Unique to German society is a strongly ostracising anti-Semitic (anti-Jewish vocabulary, e.g. ‘Jewish nose’ [‘Judennase’], ‘don’t buy from Jews’ [‘kaufst nicht bei Juden’]) or anti-Euthanasia (e.g. German: ‘ab zum vergasen/ ab ins Gas’ [‘on to gasing’], ‘Krüppelparade’ [‘parade of cripples’]) vocabulary, while in the US there is anti-native or racist vocabulary (e.g. ‘Indian’ [‘native’], ‘nigger’ [‘coloured’]). It is not just the overall limitations that a society names ‘acceptable’, or ‘normal', but also the individual environment that a specific language is used. For example, whereas the term ‘Krüppel’ ‘cripple' would not be allowed in a legal text or public address to the nation, it is well received, understood and used by a peer group for politically radical people with impairments in their contexts or life worlds. It serves them as identification mark to express ‘otherness’.

The term political correctness has a long tradition (18th century). It has come to the fore since the late 1980s. Politically correct is defined as what people would or would not accept in specific forms of communication. Communication, here, includes every expression in bodily, artistic or mental language, including metalanguage, symbols, arts and other forms. Direct communication forms such as language, gesture or mimics, as well as indirect forms of expression like theatre, music, dance or the arts, are included. Whereas the arts are more open to cross cultural-linguistic borders (e.g. theatre, arts installations, advertisement), religious or political environments are much more restricted to local or national environments and under public observation. Public

and social media, written and oral, are free in usage due to the freedom of speech and the empathy to provoke. What are the boundaries? In political correctness the realm of taboo, a Polynesian word brought to the West by explorer Thomas Cook, signals areas of no-go, scratching on the realm of the holy, the sacred, or magic, thus referring to religious areas of life under scrutiny. Politically correct, instead, goes beyond and covers the linguistic violation of culturally coined areas of life. The audience is expecting politically correct language and is sanctioning transgression (see FN 2). Thus, the focus of politically correct language is on conflict prevention and the inclusive use of vocabulary and grammar serving the audience.

The conception of nondiscriminatory or inclusive language (German: gerechte Sprache) is relatively new, at least its proclamation as a translation strategy. Nondiscriminatory or inclusive language attempts to include as many social groups as possible within a society. Nondiscriminatory language is an ideological long-term strategy for written media. In Bible translation nondiscriminatory language is used to

- address gender issues (gender inclusive),
- avoid anti-Semitic/anti-Jewish terminology,
- express inclusive language (anti-ableism) or
- present and emphasise social-ethical thought of the authors’ times.

2 The discussion about despicable entries in social media in Germany, so called hate messages (German: Hassnachrichten) regarding anti-Semitic, racist or homophobic contributions and the (in-)voluntary commitment of companies, such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter etc. to the deletion of such, is just one focus of political correctness.

3 The German term ‘gerecht’ is not easy to define and therefore to translate. It expresses different levels of meanings. It is an adjective derivate from the noun ‘Gerechtigkeit’ that is ‘justice’. The corresponding English adjective ‘just’ is only very limited transporting the legal connotation (‘just’ in the sense of ‘a just law serving all’) but is mainly used as an adverb expressing temporary importance (‘I just arrived.’). The German adjective is only recently used in the context of describing the use of language. For now the translation in this article is fluent, based on the context, but with a strong emphasis on ‘inclusion’.

4 Nondiscriminatory language by definition is corrective in nature. It is criticising the given usage of terminology and thus existing Bible translations and their authors. This negative approach is what causes denial or mistrust and irritation. The German Bibel in gerechter Sprache [Engl.: Bible in ‘just’ language] was declared ‘not-to-be-recommended’ by an expert report of the official Protestant Church [German: theologisches Gutachten]. Wilckens, Ulrich 2007. Theologisches Gutachten zur „Bibel
As with political correctness, nondiscriminatory language is dependent on the spirit of the times [German: Zeitgeist], namely recent ideological, political and social-ethical influences. Both build on experience and correction and aim at a shift in language and thought. However, ‘political correctness’ is much more a natural and intuitive linguistic approach stimulated by critical reflection and thought. As such it is a driving force to the development of ‘nondiscriminatory and inclusive language’. Having this relationship in mind, nondiscriminatory and inclusive language is used to criticise and correct communicative or linguistic expressions, which seem wrong, namely exclusive, discriminatory or rejecting terminology.

To name just one example: ‘brothers and sisters’ is gender inclusive language; if only ἀδελφοί adelphoi ‘brothers’ are mentioned (e.g. Lk 21:16) it is understood to be exclusive. Since the 1960s it has become politically important to address feminism and gender equality in the public domain. The Church was forced by the political scene and feminist theologians to respond to the views of feminist and liberal theologians in homiletics, hermeneutics and Bible translations. In Bible translation the focus on male actors and the overexposure of male language was intensified by the factors of dominantly male translators. Additionally, the central topics, ‘God and Jesus Christ’, were presented as exclusively male, knowing that gender is secondary to the divine. This caused feminist theologians to highlight gender neutral expressions and female actors in the Biblical narratives. The long overdue inclusion of female Bible translators was a secondary development. The Good News Bible, Scandinavian Bible translations, and nowadays most revisions follow this approach out of political correctness, without calling it nondiscriminatory language.\(^5\) It seems the term ‘inclusive language’ is less negatively loaded with resentments to modern scholars as nondiscriminatory language, but less used.

\(^5\) Interestingly female Bible translators do not raise their voice in traditional translation projects, if the translation protocol follows the philological-concordant paradigm.
Thus, another factor about nondiscriminatory language comes into focus. The ideologically-oriented approach is suspected of falsifying a text by using terminology that would lead the audience away from the meaning of the source text. The deeply rooted fear of syncretism or heresy by conservative theologians goes against ‘communicative’ translation theory. Therefor they trust only in a philological-concordant literal methodology. The drawback of that approach is the foreignisation of a text under the notion of ‘understood foreignness’ [German: ‘heilsame Fremdheit’] resulting in a difficulty in understanding for the audience (Venuti 2010:48-48). In Bible translation the concept of divine inspiration and (in)direct divine control on a text, following 2Tim 3:16; 2Pet 1:19-21; Rev 22:18, drives the Bible translators to hold on to a vocabulary and grammatical constructions without domestication. The contextualised translation of the ground text into the environment of an audience is unacceptable. As stated, ‘understood foreignness’ is one of the catchphrases of this approach (Alkier 2010:66-67). The idea is to transport foreign concepts into a new cultural-linguistic realm and bring them to life there. Quite the reverse, ‘communicative’ Bible translations avoid the problem of political correctness by audience orientation and the inclusion of mother tongue speakers. A protocol is needed to define the areas of nondiscriminatory

---

6 Wilckens calls the emphasis on female actors and aspects of God ‘sexualisation’ [‘Sexualisierung’] and argues that such an attempt opposes the nature of the Biblical God and is deeply heretic (2007:151).


9 The term Jesus ‘Christ’ is an example. ‘Christ’ comes from Χριστός Christos and is a Greek transliteration that is now domesticated by the Church (BDAG 2000 entry 7986).
or inclusive language and a close and sensitive listening to the terminology and phrases that the people addressed use.

2. Examples, Modifications and Limitations

Another area of high public interest concerns racist or anti-Semitic, better anti-Jewish, language. It must be emphasised that very recently voices arise that say that anti-Semitic would also include anti-Arab sentiments, as being also a Semitic ethnicity. Such an idea is found in the assumptions that Abrahams and Sarah’s servant Hagar was cursed and not blessed, and that this curse serves all Arab ethnicities. The idea is followed up by the Apostle Paul in his comparative study of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians (Gen 25:12 ff.; Gal 4:20-31 mainly 24-25). The eight references to the Arab nations in the Hebrew Bible are all negative and demonstrate the resentments of the authors. The Pentecostal wonder of the tongues breaches this assumption (Acts 2:11). Mainly, anti-Semitic language is aimed to discredit the Jewish people. It makes a difference if the term Ἰουδαῖος Ioudaios ‘Juden’ (total of 243 times) is highlighted as ‘the Jews’ and always philological-concordantly presented, or if there is variation such as ‘the Jewish people’, ‘the Jewish men and women’ and other expressions. In the context of the phrase ‘king of the Jews’, the term gets a hypothetical direction, which assumes that historically the term ‘the Jews’ describes a homogenous society. The inner-biblical proof of the many sects, ideological groups and rulers states otherwise. After the Holocaust, the Shoah, the loaded term became a metaphor to signal anti-Jewish resentments. Idioms like ‘you Jew, Jew-boy, Jew-butcher, Jew-baiter’, if someone bargains, or claims debts

10 The deeply political argument is due to the Middle East crisis around the modern Arab-Israel, or better Palestinian-Israel, confrontation, which started with the foundation of Israel in 1948 but reaches far back to Ishmael and Isaac. How else would this argument not include Amharic, Tigrinya or Maltese that is other Semitic language groups?

11 In contrast, the offering of gold and silver to King Solomon in 2Chr 9:14 demonstrates at least official relationships, and proclaims the Arab nations as old kingdoms of influence and prestige. Missiological circles that proclaim the brotherhood or common descent of Judaism, Christianity and Islam consider the two announcements by the angel of God and God himself on Hagar and Ishmael a blessing. They await the eschatological re-unification of all three Abrahamic religions (Gen 16:8-16, 21:9-21).

12 The recent anti-Israel initiative, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), to increase political pressure on Israel to meet its obligations, is another international attempt of political, economic and social isolation of the Jewish people.
(Hughes 2006:149),

are just one indicator that anti-Semitism/ anti-Jewishness is deeply rooted in prejudices against this ethnicity. High migration rates from those countries foster anti-Jewish resentments, so the problem infiltrates countries of migration that are fighting anti-Semitism. One could ask whether the authors of the Hebrew Bible did their ethnicity a disservice by the many self-criticisms that are given there. However, this argument also supports the view that the biblical books were initiated by the impact of the Israelite divinity, so they were written above all critique, as it were. Following the argument of nondiscriminatory language it is political correct to be careful of the terms ‘Jew’, and ‘the Jews’, and to use the translations suggested above. Interestingly, Jewish media in Germany, e.g. Jüdische Allgemeine [Jewish General], use the terms ‘Jew’, and ‘the Jews’ without any hesitation. However, there is the suspicion that this is used as a unique feature to counteract their misuse during the National socialist propaganda.

Anti-Semitism is a good example because it also includes the Arab ethnicity, and the argument is raised that the terms ‘Arab’, and ‘the Arabs' as used in the West come with high arrogance. So far, the public media undergo this by referring to the nation state that a person, who is considered an ‘Arab’, is from. A Kuwaiti Arab is thus called ‘a Kuwaiti’, a Palestinian Arab ‘a Palestinian’ etc.

A third example is racist language such as ‘nigger’, which is avoided nowadays, and sometimes replaced by the euphemism ‘the N-word’. We need to keep in mind that provocative language used by coloured people themselves about a unique feature (e.g. rap music; theatre) or historical reviews (e.g. Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer) refer back to such terminology. Also ‘niggerhead’ used for a coneflower, or in German ‘Negerküsse’ (‘kisses of black’) or

---


14 This argument is often used by proponents of direct or verbal inspiration, stating that the Holy Scripture was literally dictated to the authors. Proponents of more anthropocentric attempts of inspiration are arguing that the authors were free in writing, but religiously motivated and driven. Martin Luther concluded in his ‘was Christum treibet’ [‘what is driven by Christ’] that all things are going out of and reaching to Christ. In this sense inspiration is framed by salvation history, which is Christ-centred. Other approaches to inspiration go further and claim any divine interest as superficial influence.
'Mohrenköpfe' (‘niggerhead’) for a unique sweet are replaced by other terminology (coneflower, ‘Schaumküsse’ ‘marshmallow kisses’). In spoken language, the depth of encyclopaedic world knowledge, which is shared by the members of a language community, still keeps the meaning alive. A reminder is needed not to use such offensive terminology. Language of segregation is also part of this phenomenon. It is often used to express the dichotomy of ‘they’ and ‘we’. The marginalisation of ‘the other’ as ‘otherness’ is one step towards isolating, insulting, or discriminating against, a target group. In this rhetorical approach, not just what is said, but also what is left out by hinting that an audience shares the same encyclopaedic world knowledge, is part of political incorrectness. Phrases such as ‘we all know what that means’, or ‘the XXX-word’, or the mere pausing in a sentence like ‘this … is worse than the pest’ leave enough room for a negative interpretation.

An example of Biblical use is found in the word δοῦλος doulos ‘slave, servant’ (German: Diener, Knecht, Sklave). Here the term is translated following either the social status or the function of a person in a household. Ancient slavery has different roots from the injustice that was effected on Afro-American slaves from the 16th to the 19th Century, or nowadays in North-African, Middle Eastern or Far Eastern countries. Ancient slavery was part of the social stratification of society, like today’s employer-employee relationship. The free-man stood in contrast to the bound-man who was obliged to serve a master. The military was a third institution which offered an alternative stratification (rulers, soldiers, servants). Nondiscriminatory language aims to define the status of the person addressed in the biblical text according to the historical horizon. However, it does not reveal its function or modern equivalent, thus the text is alienating (following foreignisation) ancient concepts into modern audiences’ world knowledge. This leaves the audiences with the problem of understanding what was meant by ‘slavery’, not just in the ancient times, but also during the Renaissance and Enlightenment and even Industrialism and early Modernism, allowing for many interpretations and forms.

Up to today, language that offends people with impairments is not considered within nondiscriminatory language but to some degree it is considered within political correctness. For instance, recommendations are given to consider less offensive language, but even modern Bible revisions
seldom take such language into account. In Disability Studies this is increasingly criticised (e.g. Wynn 2001:402-403).\textsuperscript{15} The disability expressed by the term \textit{παράλυτικός} \textit{paralytikos} ‘lame, weak, cause to be feeble’ (BDAG 2000 entry 5605) is very general, and is not a medical but a physical description (2 Sam 4:4 und 9:3; Mat 8:6 und 9:2, 6; Mar 2:3, 5, 9, 10; Luk 5:18, 24; Act 9:33; Heb 12:12). Having said this, it is obvious that the term represents bodily impairment of persons that cannot walk on their own. Not all passages should be translated the same way. Mephibosheth, for instance, was not able to walk because his legs were weak, due to an accident as a child caused by his nanny during their escape following the deaths of King Saul and his son Jonathan (2Sam 4:4). The phrase ‘and became lame’ is far better translated ‘was not able to walk’. It is not the time here to go through all the Bible passages, but Wynn gives four basic guidelines. Firstly, it is better not to speak in general terms but be as precisely as possible. It is better to speak of ‘people with …’, ‘a person with …’, or give details such as ‘s/he was not able to see/hear/walk’ (person with visual/hearing/walking impairment). The conclusions taken from Disability Studies are important in so far as their driving force is ‘inclusion’ and the outcome of ‘inclusive language’ extends to all segments of society.\textsuperscript{16}

All these examples demonstrate the limitations of nondiscriminatory language and political correctness. As soon as a linguistic-cultural problem is identified, different strategies come into play:

- The term or concept is replaced by a \textit{new phrase}, which needs to be introduced as a replacement of the given:
  - The phrase is from its own context, therefore it is often longer and descriptive (e.g. ‘coloured people’). In the long run it happens to be replaced by a new term (e.g. ‘the coloured’).
  - The phrase is from outside and comes with explanation (see above ‘understood foreignness’). The made-up term ‘Babycast’ plays with its

\textsuperscript{16} Inclusion per definition is the attempt to form an environment that is all-accessible, all-integrative and all-sensitive. The disabled profit most from this requirement as they will get extra support for all their senses and bodily functions (mobility, five senses, mentally), e.g. easy language, accessibility, visual and hearing aid. Especially older people, public service, paramedics, police and fire(wo)men are profiting from accessibility.
origin ‘Holocaust’ and is used by opponents of abortion to express what in their view is the irresponsible ‘destruction’ of the unborn. Introduced into the German context, it comes with an explanation. The term ‘(nuclear) overkill’ is not yet translated into German and must be explained, e.g. ‘mehrfacher Overkill’ [Engl.: ‘multiple overkill’].

- The term or phrase is used by those marginalised to express their substantial features, e.g. ‘cripple’ used by persons with bodily or mental impairment, ‘dwarf’ by persons of short stature, ‘nigger’ by black people, and ‘slut’ by teenage girls to express their independence.

- Inclusive language on the one hand balances the need to avoid exclusion, and on the other hand is specific in defining a target group as small as possible.

3. Nondiscriminatory or Inclusive Language in Bible Translation – A Forecast

It is interesting to study the development of inclusive language in revisions and new or first Bible translations (Werner 2019 forthcoming). Following the philological-concordant theory of translation, the driving motivations are fidelity and accuracy. Formal equivalence in literal translation is understood as the most promising theory (see argument on inspiration above). Revisions nowadays follow the policy of preserving the ‘spirit of the original’, that is the translational tradition that a new or first Bible translation brought into existence. The local Church that a Bible translation is addressed to understands itself as its guard and the owner, in close conjunction with the global Church as protector and owner of the ground text. ‘Revision’ is thus assigned to avoid political incorrect language, such as ‘Weib’ (negative connotation regarding a quarrelsome woman e.g. ‘shrew’), ‘Krüppel’ [‘cripple’], ‘Zwerg’ [‘dwarf’], or out-of-date grammatical constructions, e.g. the pronoun ‘thou’ in the King James Version or the ending ‘…et’ on verbs in the German Luther Bible (‘treibet, gehet, sehet’), as well as the seldom used German grammatical

---

18 Revisions and new Bible translations are those Bible translations that are translated in an environment where there is at least one existing influential Bible translation used by a Church. First Bible translations are in contexts that have no Bible translation or Church.
subjunctive II [German: Konjunktiv II] which was again introduced in the *Luther Bible 2017*\(^{19}\) after being mainly replaced in the revisions of 1975 and 1984.\(^{20}\) The *Luther Bible 2017* (fifth official Protestant Church revision) as well as the *Einheitsübersetzung 2016*\(^ {21}\) (first revision) postulate the preservation of the linguistic and theological features of the original.\(^ {22}\) With the 1999 ‘Revision of the Luther Bible’, which focused on the new German spelling rules, the harmful term ‘Weib’ [~’shrew’, see above] was completely changed to ‘woman, wife’ [German: ‘Frau’, ‘Ehefrau’], which now most German Bible translations follow. Thus, inclusive language was introduced driven by feminist pressure to use politically correct expressions.\(^ {23}\) ‘Inclusive or nondiscriminatory language’ is still focusing on gender-related language only in Bible translation, and Disability Studies, sexual orientation, animal welfare, the interreligious dialogue or other interests are seldom mentioned.

At this point it is worth thinking a bit about translation and ideology. Ideology in this sense is understood as a personal opinion, a mainstream belief or a (small) group philosophy. As well as political (e.g. Marxism, Socialism), economic (e.g. Capitalism, social market economy) or religious (e.g. Judaism, Scientology, Buddhism) ideologies, there are scientific ideas that are more general (e.g. social deconstructionism, intersubjectivism) and others that are


discipline oriented. Since the (Bible) translator is dependent on and part of the spirit of the times, s/he is not objective but basically subjective in the perceptive faculty, as a child of her/his time, to use just one metaphor. In Bible translation the idea is that an anthropocentric impact is suppressed by the influence of the Holy Spirit that is a Theo-or Christocentric influence. However, the hermeneutical circle that is thus introduced follows the reformation principle – ‘whatever advances the cause of Christ’ – not to say that this is what Martin Luther meant – and the argument goes that the Holy Scripture is inspired by God, therefor only the Church, as the representation of God, is able to study, translate and interpret the Bible. All exegetical works, commentaries, dictionaries or encyclopaedias about the Bible follow that paradigm. This causes a conservatism, which fears syncretism, corruption etc. and as such is seldom self-critical, reflexive or aiming at renewal. The above-mentioned theological expert report from Ulrich Wilckens on the Bibel in gerechter Sprache (2007; Footnotes 4 and 6) demonstrates this circle. For him a Bible translation that presents the base text in an inclusive manner is ideologically biased, he calls this ‘alien interests of an ideological nature’ (2007:151). He is assuming that a ‘tradition’ is framing any Bible translation, without reflecting the linguistic-cultural limitations of a Bible translation which follows a ‘tradition’. In fact, a Bible translation is a religious, and thus sacred, text of a community of people that admire the divinity behind the text. It is the (translated) text itself that is preserved at some point. To overcome the culturally linguistic narrow-mindedness of the Church, it is necessary to include experts from outside (e.g. linguists, different, social classes, other religions), try out new forms of translation strategy (e.g. online Bible, oral story-telling, a digital translation community), or listen to social trends that effect also the Church. The latter is already influencing homiletics (e.g. sermons, the church teaching), the public presentation of the Church on actual politics, as well as the universities and theological trainings.

Nondiscriminatory or inclusive language in Bible translation is neither more nor less ideological than any other attempt, especially literal translation. The choice of words, grammatical constructions or strategies of indigenisation defines the results and is as random as any ideological considerations. However, a functional translation that follows the doctrine of inclusive language has to define its goals, the audience orientation and a protocol of the qualitative
translation evaluation (Nord 2003:77, 82-83). A translation can be called nondiscriminatory or inclusive if it tends towards the inclusion of those social segments that are normally marginalised by discrimination, ignorance of rejection. Such an orientation is focused less on general linguistics than on the cultural analysis of a peer-group. This is only possible by bringing the anti-Semitic, ableism following, racist, gender exclusive or other discriminating language to the fore.

An understanding of the dynamics that go with specific terminology is best informed by the sensitive investigation of those that are affected and their participation. Here is an example from Disability Studies. The tricky part of political correctness is well expressed in Wynn’s third suggestion to avoid euphemistic language, because that ‘reinforces the view that disability is not something that people should talk about’ (2001:404). The tension of speaking about something in such a way that those described do not feel offended is not an easy task. On the other hand, taking those described into account demonstrates their use of terminology. Often it is just a little change in terminology but a big difference in audience orientation and inclusion. For instance, instead of ‘blind man’, the second best translation would be a personalisation: ‘a man who was blind’ (Jeremiah 31:8; Mar 8:22-23). There is an even better translation which takes the vocabulary of those addressed into consideration. As it is described there, a possible translation would be ‘a man with a visual impairment’ (2001:404). Another example from Romans 16:7 is from gender studies. In most Bible translations Ἰουνιᾶς Junias is not translated as a clearly identified woman, instead, as in BDAG (2000 entry 3733), it is identified as a short form of ‘Junianus’, thus a male Judean Christian. It is mainly the description of this person as being ‘a kinsmen’ and ‘a fellow prisoner’ that led exegetes to the assumption that only a man could be meant. The Bibel in gerechter Sprache translates it in German as ‘Junia’, which is a feminine name. The note 772 explains that it was a well-known female name in Roman times. It would have been better to translate ‘… and (our sister) Junia’ to emphasise that she is a female, if this is considered by the translators to work

---

towards inclusive language. Regardless, if this is done in a (foot)note or in the main text, both options need to be mentioned.


I have tried to exemplify the limitations of nondiscriminatory or inclusive language and political correctness. However, up to this point it may not be clear what the concerns may be. One area of concern is about postmodern arbitrariness in Bible translation. If political correctness is used as an ideological hammer it leads to inertia and a fear of making mistakes. Thus communication is hindered and freedom of speech is under attack by those who are not interested in respect and human dignity but in forcing others into reticence. Such, arbitrariness has to be framed by mutual agreement of the limitations that a society is cultural-linguistically accepting. The balance is between the opinion-forming process and the respect that is paid out of dignity to each member. The Golden Rule known as the law of reciprocity serves well. Known as a religious or cultural directive, it states that “one should treat others as s/he wants to be treated”, or put negatively, that “one should do nothing that s/he does not want to be done to her/him”. A third more emphatic form “wishes for others what you wish for yourself”. The basic principle of empathy to others is stated in many religions and was defined by Jesus of Nazareth as a summary of the Jewish Law (Torah), “Do to others what you want them to do to you. This is the meaning of the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets” (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31). Political correctness coming from this directive leads directly to nondiscriminatory and inclusive language as its focus and is a self-reflexive and sensitive approach to include all segments of society.

Conclusion

In this article the closeness of political correctness and nondiscriminatory or inclusive language has come into focus. Political correctness is a driving force towards inclusion. As such it is foundational to nondiscriminatory or inclusive language. Political correctness is a public strategy, which is flexible and sometimes temporarily. Especially if terminology is, in the short term, abused as discrimination (e.g. often in becoming swear words), political correctness is a helpful linguistic strategy to sort such vocabulary out. As shown, such words or phrases are often used as identifiers from the marginalised to point out their ‘otherness’ (e.g. cripple) and thus gain acceptance again in specific contexts.
Nondiscriminatory or inclusive language develops out of a corrective approach and aims long-term to avoid bad language. Often political correctness triggers linguistic considerations that are implemented by nondiscriminatory or inclusive language. The arbitrariness of translation decisions is influenced by political correctness, and nondiscriminatory or inclusive language is a way of implementing social fairness to all segments of social stratification. The balance of freedom of speech and the respect of human dignity frame the strategy of political correctness as well as nondiscriminatory or inclusive language.

References


