Readability of three English translations of the Bible for learners of English as a second or foreign language

Karen Lee Mann

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Readability of three English translations of the Bible for learners of English as a second or foreign language

by

Karen Lee Mann

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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In Charge of Major Work

For the Major Department

For the Graduate College

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
1985
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

This study was undertaken to compare three modern English translations of the Bible in terms of their readability for learners of English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL). A growing number of religious organizations which offer English instruction in other countries are now using English versions of the Bible as a part of their EFL curricula.

A preliminary survey (see Appendix A) of 17 such programs representing 11 organizations in 11 countries (Japan, Taiwan, Pakistan, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Morocco, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Brazil, and the Philippines) revealed that five different translations are currently being used and that the respondents are interested in learning which one is the most readable for their students. Those versions mentioned with the highest frequency were the New American Standard Bible (NASB), the New International Version (NIV), and Today's English Version (TEV) which is also known as the Good News Bible; this study, therefore, focused its readability measurement on these three versions with the goal of answering the following question: Which of these versions is the least difficult reading for the learner of EFL/ESL?

Two basic questions guided the review of relevant literature in order to provide a methodological foundation
for structuring the study. First, what is meant by readability? Second, once the concept is defined, what is the best way to determine the readability of written material which will be read by students of English as a foreign or second language? The answers to these questions, as discussed in Chapter II, influenced the method of research chosen for this project.

The following terms and abbreviations are used in this report with the specific meanings which accompany them here:

cloze test: This is a test commonly used to determine readability. A passage from an article or book is mutilated so that every nth word is removed and replaced with a blank. The person taking the test is told to replace the missing word.

EFL/ESL: EFL, or English as a foreign language, refers to English taught and learned outside of an English-speaking country, while ESL, or English as a second language, designates English taught and learned in a country in which English is the dominant language. Because the difference is not crucial for this study, the terms have been used here interchangeably.
CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Readability Defined

According to Dreyer (1984), "readability has been variously defined as a text's legibility, power to interest, ease of understanding or any combination of these factors" (p. 334). She cites the analysis by Gray and Leary of the four broad categories which affect readability: format, general features of organization, style of expression and presentation, and content. Format and graphic design include such factors as "length of type line, hyphenated words, long paragraphs, confusing punctuation (or lack of punctuation), full pages of type, style and size of typeface, illustration and color" (p. 336), any of which can influence readability.

Content can be difficult to comprehend when the ideas are deep and complex. It is also true, as Chall and Dale (1948a) have indicated, that "a good deal of writing is hard because the words used are unnecessarily abstract and the sentence and paragraph structure needlessly complex" (p. 19). In this sense, content can be seen to overlap with style and expression in affecting the readability of a passage.

The concept can be further clarified by taking into account Hittleman's (1973) statement:
No discussion of readability can be undertaken without reference to comprehension. For the sake of clarity, the terms "comprehensible" and "readable" are used to mean the same thing, that is, the ability of a reader to assign meaning to a printed message and complete the act of communication initiated by the writer. (p. 784)

What makes a text comprehensible? One element is the "extent to which the text takes into account a reader's prior knowledge" (Clewell and Cliffton, 1983). Lipson (1983) arrived at a similar conclusion:

Results indicate that young subjects, like adults, use prior knowledge to help organize new information; that prior knowledge can be used as a context for choosing among alternative interpretations of text meaning; and that prior knowledge contributes to inferential comprehension. (p. 450)

In addition, the reader's prior knowledge, background and interests affect a text's power to interest that person. A 10th-grade-level reading on farming practices in Iowa is unlikely to be very readable for a city dweller whose main interest is business management, even if the reading level itself is appropriate.

Syntactic elements also appear to be significant factors in the analysis of readability. Coleman's study (cited in Bickley, Ellington and Bickley, 1970) found that
certain types of grammatical transformations (e.g., active verb transformations) were more easily comprehended by subjects than were others (e.g., nominalization forms). For example, "John confessed and admitted his guilt" is more comprehensible than "John's confession was an admission of his guilt."

Another view of readability focuses on the interaction of the author (encoder) and the reader (decoder). Anderson (1971) says that reading comprehension can be defined as the correspondence between the semantic and grammatical habit systems of encoders and decoders using the same language....

The readability or reading difficulty of a passage and a reader's comprehension of the passage are not independent entities. Rather, they are two ways of looking at the same event. If there is a close correspondence between the decoder's and the encoder's system of language habits, then the passage or message is easy to comprehend. If there is not, comprehension is difficult. (p. 180)

In other words, "readability is not an inherent property of texts, but results from the interaction between reader and text" (Dreyer, 1984, p. 337).

In summary, the numerous factors which influence readability include format, organization, style, expression and content, as well as the reader's interests and background.
Sentence length and cohesive devices, two additional elements of readability, will be discussed in the next section.

Although all of the above-mentioned aspects of readability are important, it will be here defined as the degree of correspondence between the language habits of the author and those of the reader, with a close correspondence indicating comprehensibility.

Methods of Determining Readability

Klare (1974) listed three general categories of methods used to determine readability: judgment, testing and formula. Each category has both advantages and disadvantages.

Judgment

Subjective judgment of written materials can be useful, but it is a complicated and unreliable procedure. Such judgments have been used to rank order materials in terms of difficulty, but not to provide an idea of grade level unless supplemented by some system of word or sentence count (Klare, 1974). Bamberger and Rabin (1984) did develop a "'readability profile' composed of subjective judgments on five nonlanguage variables: content, organization, print, style, and motivation" (p. 513). The authors formulated a checklist of 30 items, trained people in the use of the checklist, and applied a "combination of the language difficulty and the readability profile to several hundred books in a cross validation" (p. 516). The result was that
in a large majority of cases (70%), the assessment reached by the profile did not differ from a previous assessment of language difficulty by readability formula. The authors of this study believed that the readability profile made a "contribution towards restoring faith in the usefulness of readability measurement by formulas or additive methods" (p. 517). In other words, judgments have been useful as a means of checking the validity of readability formulas (Klare, 1963).

A further consideration for this study is the fact that people who are reading in a foreign language operate under an entirely different set of constraints than first language readers (Johnson, 1982). Therefore, a judgment of readability made by native speakers of English for EFL learners of varied backgrounds could easily be challenged.

Formulas

Readability formulas have long been used to help the classroom teacher in choosing text materials, and a variety of formulas have been developed toward this end.

All formulas, because they are by nature mechanical, have some inherent weaknesses. Many important variables cannot be considered when the main objective is a simple count of word and sentence length. Nelson (1978) indicated that formulas cannot account for "levels of abstraction, complexity of concepts, figurative and poetic language,
multiple meanings, technical and scientific vocabulary" (p. 621), while Dreyer (1984) mentions factors "which relate to syntax and complexity of sentences, unusual positioning of sentence components or clauses and number of dependent clauses" (pp. 335-336). Since correlational data form the basis of readability formulas, the users must exercise caution in their interpretation. The fact that word or sentence length correlates with the reading difficulty of a passage is not to say that either one causes reading difficulty (Nelson, 1978; Klare, 1974). "It may be that concept complexity causes both longer sentences and reading difficulty" (Nelson, 1978, p. 622). On the other hand, reducing sentence length at the expense of dropping connecting words may force readers to make inferences that are outside their experience.

A further objection to the use of formulas is the time required to do a thorough job. This has been overcome to some extent through the availability of computer software which can apply several formulas at one time to a given text. Although the computer can calculate formula results faster and less tediously, Duffelmeyer (1985) warns that this very ease of application may cause teachers to rely exclusively on the use of formulas to judge readability without taking into account their shortcomings. Apparently, the simplest formulas are also the best.
According to Klare (1974), a "2-variable formula should be sufficient, especially if one of the variables is a word or semantic variable and the other is a sentence or syntactic variable" (p. 96). Beyond that, the small increases in predictive validity are not worth the extra effort involved in applying the more complex formulas. He has further determined that the "word or semantic variable is consistently more highly predictive than the sentence or syntactic variable when each is considered singly" (p. 96).

It would be instructive to look at two of the most widely used formulas. Klare (1963) found that the "Dale-Chall and Flesch Reading Ease formulas provide the most consistently comparable results in terms of both correlational and grade-placement data" (p. 120).

Dale-Chall formula The Dale-Chall formula is based on the two counts of average sentence length (number of syllables per sentence) and the percentage of unfamiliar words, which are defined as those outside the Dale list of 3000 words "that are known in reading by at least 80% of the children in Grade IV. It is presented primarily as a list which gives significant correlation with reading difficulty" (Chall and Dale, 1948b, p. 44).

Klare (1963), in discussing McKee's warnings regarding
some problems with word lists, said that they may
(1) give an indication of visual recognition (or of
sight vocabulary) rather than conceptual meaning
(or meaning vocabulary); (2) be defective in the sense
that frequency of occurrence is not an infallible
guide to vocabulary difficulty; (3) provide no
indication of the many possible meanings of words;
and (4) encourage the questionable practice of
removing all unfamiliarity from content reading.
(p. 87)

Also, both Nolte and Robinson (cited in Klare, 1963) found
that simply replacing unfamiliar words with familiar ones,
if all other variables are constant, does not appreciably
improve comprehension.

Despite the difficulties inherent in the use of lists
of familiar words, it has been found that this practice
"appears to give a slightly more predictive index than
counting word length, probably because length is a
(secondary) reflection of familiarity" (Klare, 1974, p. 96).
For example, "undoubtedly" (four syllables) is easier to
read than "erg" (one syllable).

When considering the special needs of EFL learners,
some difficulties become apparent. A Spanish speaker,
for example, might have a much larger recognition vocabulary
in the early stages of learning English than a speaker of
Chinese or Arabic, simply because of the similarities in
language origin and alphabet. Also some EFL students have had their early training in reading very difficult and often archaic English (i.e., Milton, Shakespeare, etc.) and might know words that are very unfamiliar to a fourth-grader from the United States while being, at the same time, totally unaware of many of the words commonly used in everyday English.

Flesch formulas Rudolf Flesch devised a formula for general adult reading matter. It is calculated using number of affixes, average sentence length in words and number of personal references (Flesch, 1949). He later revised his formula because he felt the system used to score the results was unsatisfactory. The revision was called the Flesch Reading Ease (R. E.) formula and was based on the number of syllables per 100 words and the average number of words per sentence. As it has become "one of the most widely used in the history of readability measurement" (Klare, 1974, p. 69), the interpretation of the scores appears in Appendix B.

Of course, sentence length alone does not always account for complexity. Dreyer (1984) offers the idea that the sentence "'Once out, he breathed more easily' is harder than the longer sentence 'He breathed more easily once he was out of the room!'" (p. 335). Clewell and Cliffton (1983) posit that sometimes a longer sentence is necessary in order to include "the cohesive devices such as connectors and
clear pronoun referents" (p. 220), which are necessary in order to "relate ideas within texts that readers would otherwise have to infer" (p. 220).

While using the Flesch formula to analyze philosophy books, Chall (1947) found that it failed to measure some of the factors which contributed to difficulty. This underestimation of difficulty probably resulted from the failure of his formula (in its count of affixed morphemes) to account for the abstract meanings, in this particular context, of such simply constructed words or phrases as good, value, the good life, and so on. This particular example points to the necessity of accounting for the relative abstractness or concreteness of words within different contexts. (p. 9)

In short, the Flesch formulas are widely used and easy to apply, but they do have noticeable shortcomings when the global nature of the reading process is taken into consideration.

Both the Dale-Chall and Flesch formulas, as well as most other formulas, usually indicate reading difficulty by assigning grade levels, but as Haskell points out, "school grade levels are not easily applied to ESL students and certainly not with the same meaning" (1975, p. 83). One reason for this might be that the "second language learning population can be safely assumed to be less homogeneous
than schoolchildren learning to read in their native language" (Gaies, 1979, p. 44), so that the development of norm scores for ESL learners which could compare to grade level equivalents is highly unlikely.

Although readability formulas do not adequately deal with "all text features that affect comprehension" (Dreyer, 1984, p. 335), Klare (1974) maintains that "as long as predictions are all that is needed, the evidence that simple word and sentence counts can provide satisfactory predictions for most purposes is now quite conclusive" (p. 98).

Therefore, the above-described readability formulas were applied, in the present study, for purposes of prediction only.

Testing

It has already been established that the best readability assessment method would be one which takes into account all important language factors (i.e., vocabulary and syntax) as well as depth and complexity of ideas, and one which allows for maximum interaction between the reader and the text. Testing a reader's comprehension of a given text would seem to fill this multiplicity of requirements better than applying judgment or a formula.

There are two basic alternatives in testing for readability: the 'conventional' test (e.g., multiple-choice
or fill-in-the-blank) and the cloze test.

Conventional tests pose a serious problem in that a test is only as good as the items developed for it. Haskell (1973) reminds us that when using a multiple-choice test to determine readability, one must decide "whether or not the right questions were asked" (p. 77). When a student is asked to answer questions in a readability test, Pennock (1973) has posited that his score is influenced not only by the passages read, but also by the quality of the questions and his comprehension of them. In a cloze test, however, the student must respond to only one kind of stimulus—the reading selection itself. There are no extraneous questions of unknown difficulty to act as an unassessed and intervening variable. (pp. 37-38)

Bormuth (1968) wanted to establish a frame of reference by determining how scores on cloze and multiple-choice tests compare, and found that cloze tests are valuable for performing readability research "because they are highly reliable and valid and can be easily and objectively constructed and scored" (1967, p. 291). In one study, he determined that the "correlations between the cloze and conventional tests over each passage ranged from .73 to .84. When the correlations were corrected for the unreliabilities of the tests, the correlations approached 1.00" (p. 431).
Since the results of a cloze test compare favorably with those obtained from a well-constructed conventional test, the ease of construction and administration of the cloze test would seem to favor its use. A discussion of cloze procedure and recent findings regarding the construction, administration and scoring of cloze tests follows.

Theory of cloze testing
Cloze procedure may be defined as: A method of intercepting a message from a "transmitter" (writer or speaker), mutilating its language patterns by deleting parts, and so administering it to "receivers" (readers or listeners) that their attempts to make the patterns whole again potentially yield a considerable number of cloze units. (Taylor, 1953, p. 416)

Taylor coined the word "cloze", derived from "closure", a principle of Gestalt psychology which describes the "human tendency to complete a familiar but not-quite-finished pattern— to 'see' a broken circle as a whole one, for example, by mentally closing up the gaps" (1953, p. 415). More recent theorists debate the validity of that comparison. Anderson (1971) finds no empirical evidence in support of it, while Bormuth (1968) believes that "the processes required to fill cloze blanks are probably not different from those required to answer conventionally made items" (p. 430).
In a cloze test, every nth (commonly 5th, 7th or 10th) word is deleted from a passage and replaced by a blank line. The reader uses the remaining context to guess the word which originally filled that blank. The reader is, in a sense, guessing at the author's original intention. In this way, as Taylor (1953) indicated, "cloze procedure takes a measure of the likeness between the patterns a writer has used and the patterns the reader is anticipating while he is reading" (p. 417). Anderson (1971) called it "one of the most promising techniques to emerge in recent years for measuring comprehension and reading difficulty" (p. 181).

Agreement on the validity of cloze as a test of readability is nearly unanimous, but there are differing approaches to the mechanics of the procedure.

Construction of cloze tests In the original studies of cloze testing, all passages were 175 or more words in length (Taylor, 1953). Bormuth (1968) suggests that passages 250 to 300 words in length will fit nicely on a single page. Six to 12 such passages can be chosen as a representative sampling of the material to be tested. He states that "each sample should be a length of continuous text, and it should begin at the beginning of a paragraph. The samples need not be of exactly identical length since the evaluator will be working with percentage scores" (p. 435).

In most cases, cloze tests are constructed with a deletion rate of every 5th word, especially for use with
native speakers of English. However, recent studies with students of English as a second language cited by Haskell (1973) have used different deletion rates, based on the assumption that providing more context is fairer to this group. He says that "while studies using native speakers usually use a deletion rate of every 5th word the most common types of deletion for ESL studies seems to be that of every 7th or every 10th word" (p. 80).

Taylor (1953) indicates that every-nth-word deletion should ignore the differences between specific words, allowing proper nouns to be deleted as well as content and function words because the existence of a large number of proper nouns in a passage may be in itself an indication of readability. However, this would not necessarily be true for a case such as the current study which focuses on different versions of the same text, since all three translations share the same proper nouns. Moreover, according to Haskell (1975), in recent studies, it has been a generally accepted procedure to skip unguessable numbers or proper nouns and delete the next word instead. "This procedure does not disturb the mechanical nature of the procedure, when used with ESL students, nor the value of the test results" (p. 84).

**Administering the test** The students selected for the test should be as representative as possible of the population for whom the reading material is intended. According to
Bormuth (1968), the most desirable procedure is to give the tests to students who have not read the passages from which the tests are made. Because of the number of tests required to adequately evaluate the readability of a book and the time required to complete each test, he cautions that "it is seldom desirable to give all the tests to every student. It is perfectly permissible to break the group up into subgroups and administer a fraction of the tests to each subgroup" (p. 435).

Taylor (1953) estimated the time required to complete a 175-word cloze test at 10 to 15 minutes. It might be expected that a test of similar length would take longer for an ESL student.

Scoring the test One issue in scoring responses on a cloze test is whether to use the "exact-word", "any appropriate word", or "synonym" scoring method. The bulk of the evidence supports the use of exact-word scoring (also known as "verbatim" scoring) which counts as correct only that word which exactly replaces a missing word, disregarding minor misspellings but not allowing grammatically incorrect responses, because Bormuth (1968) learned that grammatically correct responses had the only significant correlations with conventional tests of comprehension. Although Haskell (1975) found no significant difference in the group scores whether using the exact-word, any appropriate word, or synonym
scoring method, he opts for the exact-word method because of the speed and objectivity with which the evaluation can be accomplished. Since the concern is for the degree of correspondence between text and reader, exact-word scoring is, according to Taylor (1953), "not only defensible but rationally inescapable when cloze procedure is used for contrasting readabilities" (p. 419).

The number of exact replacement guesses is then totaled and the passage with the highest score is considered the most readable (Taylor, 1956). The scores can be expressed in terms of a percentage calculated by dividing the number of exact-word replacements by the total number of blanks. This type of percentage score will "allow the reading difficulties of passages for a given group of students to be compared" (Anderson, 1971, p. 181).

Interpretation of the scores
There is some value in knowing that one passage is more difficult for students than another. But a cloze readability score has little value unless a teacher can say that the score does or does not represent a satisfactory level of performance on the materials from which the test was made. (Bormuth, 1968, pp. 432-433)

A score of 75% on a conventional comprehension test is a widely-used standard for determining whether material
is suitable for use in instruction. Bormuth (1967) structured a study intended to provide a framework for comparing cloze scores with conventional test scores in order to establish equivalent scales. He found that a cloze score of 44% compared to 75% on a conventional test, and a score of 57% on cloze compared to 90% on a conventional test. Anderson (cited in Haskell, 1975) offered the criterion levels of "Frustration" (scores below 44%), "Instruction" (between 44% and 53%), and "Independent reading" (above 53%). Pennock (1973) places the minimum criterion for reading without frustration at 40%.

Summary

The current project is concerned with readability as it affects students of English as a second or foreign language, and this emphasis should influence the choice of a tool to assess the readability of the three translations of the Bible which are under consideration here. As has been discussed, subjective judgment lacks reliability, and its validity is questionable when the judgment is applied by a native speaker to material which will be read by ESL students from various language groups. Readability formulas have been found to be both valid and reliable as predictors of readability of material to be used by native speakers of English, but the formulas do not incorporate all important language factors. Testing seems to be the best indicator
of the degree of match between the reader and the text, but conventional comprehension tests have limitations due to the difficulty of constructing test items which are truly representative. Cloze tests have been shown to correlate highly with well-constructed conventional comprehension tests and are both valid and reliable for determining levels of readability.

The literature on readability indicates that the cloze procedure would be the most suitable method of determining the readability of the three translations used in the present study. Therefore, cloze tests were chosen as the primary assessment tool for the purposes of this study because they are practical to prepare, administer and score, and the results can be expressed in terms of the rank order of reading difficulty of the three translations. Before the administration of the cloze tests, the passages chosen for the tests were subjected to computer analysis using the Dale-Chall formulas as predictors of the final outcome.

Hypothesis

For the purposes of the current project, it was decided to test the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the readability of the three translations.
CHAPTER III. METHOD

In structuring this study, the general pattern of typical readability experiments was followed. The guidelines and procedures used in the study are discussed in this chapter.

Selection of Students

The investigation dealt with the readability of various translations of the Bible for students of English as a foreign or second language. For the purposes of this study, this group was defined as non-native speakers of English who had received a score of 500 or more on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), a standardized proficiency test developed by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, New Jersey. The TOEFL score restriction was adopted in order to limit the variable of level of proficiency in English.

Learners of English from seven countries who were currently students or spouses of students at Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, volunteered to participate. Most of the volunteers were obtained by contacting campus Bible study groups.

Selection of Passages

The following criteria determined the selection of passages to be used in the testing:

1. Passages should all be in the narrative style. Although it is acknowledged that some poetic and prophetic
sections of the Bible would be more difficult reading, the purpose here was not to test the readability of the Bible per se, but to compare the difficulty of the styles of translation. A subjective judgment was made that this could best be accomplished by confining the study to one type of writing (i.e., narrative).

2. Passages should contain a somewhat complete story to provide context for the subjects reading the passage.

3. Passages should be approximately 200 words in length, although a 200-word passage in one translation is apt to contain fewer or more words in another.

Using these guidelines, I selected six passages, three from the Old Testament and three from the New Testament.

The Cloze Procedure

Deletion

In constructing the cloze tests, the first verse of each passage was left intact to provide an initial context and to prevent a high frustration level for the reader. Since the punctuation differs from one translation to another, I could not leave intact the first sentence. In some instances, the first sentence in one translation contained the same information as the first two sentences in another. This can be seen in the first verse of Chapter Four of the book of Esther:
TEV: When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes in anguish. Then he dressed in sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and walked through the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.

NIV: When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly.

After the first verse, every seventh word was deleted, excepting proper nouns and unguessable numbers (as suggested by Haskell, 1975). It was deemed to be especially necessary to bypass proper nouns in the counting process because all three translations cover the same content and in most cases include the same proper nouns, but the deletion process, due to differences in syntax, would delete such proper nouns unequally in each translation.

When a word was deleted, it was replaced by a fourteen-space blank to insure adequate space for the subject to fill in the answer. Because the passages were unequal in length, the number of blanks per test varied from 20 to 30.

Sequence of Tests

Each test was expected to take 20 minutes to complete. If a subject were expected to take all 18 tests (six passages times three translations), six hours would be required. Also;
reading the same passage three times, once in each translation, might have a cumulative effect on the reading comprehension of the subjects. For these reasons, and to limit variability due to differences in subjects' English proficiency, the guidelines listed below were followed:

1. Each student took six tests.
2. All students took tests over the same six passages.
3. All students took two tests from the TEV, NIV and NASB, respectively, on a rotating basis.
4. All students took the test passages in a different rotating sequence.
5. Each of the 18 tests was read by 12 students.

In this way, a random distribution was provided, as illustrated by Table 1. For example, the first subject would receive Test Packet 1 which included Passage 1 in the NASB, Passage 2 in the TEV, Passage 3 in the NIV, etc.

Also, an attempt was made to distribute the tests equally among speakers of different languages (see Table 2.) Within each of the six groups, the tests made two complete rotations (that is, each of the 18 tests was read twice). Test packet distribution by language background is shown in Table 2. The 18 tests can be found in Appendix C.
Table 1. Sequence for collating tests

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<td>E I A E I A</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>A I E A I E</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>E A I I E A</td>
</tr>
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<td>E I A A I E</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>I A E I E A</td>
</tr>
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<td>31</td>
<td>A E I I A E</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>A I E I A E</td>
</tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>E A I E A I</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>E A I I A E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>E I A E A I</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>E I A I A E</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I E A E A I</td>
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<td>I E A I A E</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I A E E A I</td>
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<td>I A E I A E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: A=New American Standard Bible  
E=Today’s English Version  
I=New International Version  

1=Esther 4:1-8  
2=Daniel 1:8-16  
3=Jonah 1:1-8  
4=Matthew 8:5-13  
6=Acts 3:1-10
Table 2. Distribution of tests by language background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language background</th>
<th>Test Packet #</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>2 9 16 23 30 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>3 10 17 24 25 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>1 8 15 22 29 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>4 11 18 19 26 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous 1&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>5 12 13 20 27 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous 2&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>6 7 14 21 28 35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Included one Japanese and five Korean speakers.
<sup>b</sup> Included one Arabic, two Japanese, and three Chinese speakers.

Administration of the tests

The tests were administered in two sessions, one in the afternoon and one, two days later, in the evening. Half of the group attended each session. The time allotted for completing the tests was two hours. All subjects completed the tests within the time limit.

Scoring

The tests were corrected allowing one point for each exact-word replacement. Minor misspellings were disregarded. The total of all correct responses was tallied for each translation and a score calculated in terms of number of
correct replacements as a percentage of total number of replacements possible.
The study described here investigated the difference in reading difficulty of three modern English translations of the Bible in order to determine which translation is the most readable for learners of English as a second or foreign language. Two methods were used for the investigation of this question. First, the Dale-Chall and both Flesch readability formulas were applied to the passages for predictive purposes, followed by the cloze procedure for assessing readability.

To begin the study, the six narrative passages from each translation were analyzed by three of the most widely-used readability formulas. This process was simplified by the use of a computer program which calculates readability according to nine formulas, although, for the purposes of this study, the only results used were the Dale-Chall and the two Flesch formulas, which are summarized in Table 3. In four of the six passages, both the Dale-Chall and Flesch grade level formulas indicated that the TEV would be suitable for less-skilled readers than would the NASB; in the other two passages, the TEV and NASB were of equal readability. In two of the passages, the TEV ranked at a lower grade level than the NIV; otherwise, they were rated as equivalent.

The overall averages of the readability formula ratings for each translation offered a more conclusive pattern. An
Table 3. Results of computer readability analysis of the six passages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PASSAGE</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESTHER 4:1-8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td># of words</td>
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<td>243</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-syll. wds</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td># of syllables</td>
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<td>329</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4.1</td>
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<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td>64</td>
<td>91</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>7-8</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale-Chall grade</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daniel 1:8-16</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>210</td>
<td>215</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>266</td>
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<td>124</td>
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<td>sent./100 wds</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale-Chall grade</td>
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<td>4th</td>
<td>5-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PASSAGE</th>
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<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
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<tr>
<td>syll./100 wds</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>sent./100 wds</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
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<td>4th</td>
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<tr>
<td>or</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>less</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
even gradation can be seen in the general difficulty level of the three translations; the TEV ranked most readable, the NIV next, and the NASB least readable, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Readability formula results averaged

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formula</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flesch R.E. (^a)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
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<td>Flesch grade level</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dale-Chall grade level</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)For interpretation of R.E. score, see Appendix B.

Since there is some question regarding the validity of readability formulas when applied to materials for EFL/ESL learners, the six passages were also tested using the cloze procedure with a subject pool of 36 ESL learners. The subjects correctly guessed the exact original words 57\% of the time in the six TEV passages. In the NIV and NASB passages, the scores were 51.3\% and 50.5\%, respectively.

The difference between the scores on the TEV and the other two translations thus seems quite clear, but the difference between the scores on the NIV and the NASB is not as marked, although the analysis by formula had indicated that there would be a definite rank order among the three translations based on the sample of the six narrative passages.

In order to account for the seeming difference in the results gained from these two procedures, it was deemed
necessary to compute the analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the cloze test scores for the three translations. The first ANOVA was used to analyze the total scores on each passage with the dependent variable being the proportion of correct guesses on each passage and the independent variable being the translation itself. The results reported in Table 5 show a statistical significance only on Passage 1 (Esther 4:1-8).

In order to visualize the relationships involved, the means were plotted on a graph, revealing the pattern shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Comparison of means for translations by passage
Table 5. Analysis of variance of cloze test scores by passage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>Mean Squares</th>
<th>F Ratio</th>
<th>F Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Esther 4:1-8</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.28334889</td>
<td>0.14167444</td>
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<td>0.0033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daniel 1:8-16</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<td>0.01728780</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected total</td>
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<td>0.67341393</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jonah 1:1-8</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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<td>0.02036508</td>
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<td>0.3689</td>
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<tr>
<td>Error</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.69454756</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Matthew 8:5-13</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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<td>0.06791414</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>0.95387139</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Luke 24:1-11</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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<td>0.00112249</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.9372</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.01728363</td>
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<td>0.57260480</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Acts 3:1-10</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Model</td>
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</table>
Table 6. Mean percentage scores by passage

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<th></th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEV</td>
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<td>54.6</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
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<td>NIV</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>51.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison of the means by passage as presented in Table 6 and graphically illustrated in Figure 1 indicated that Passages 2 and 4 do not adhere to the same pattern as the others. At this point, a closer analysis of the cloze tests for these passages was undertaken to see if there was anything inherent in the tests which would explain this lack of uniformity in the results. The three tests on Passage 2 as well as the three on Passage 4 were analyzed in terms of percent of content words (e.g., nouns, verbs, modifiers) and percent of function words (e.g., articles, conjunctions, etc.) in the texts. From this analysis, it was possible to see a clear disparity among the tests over each passage. The percent of content words was almost constant at 65% to 66% in each passage as a whole. However, the percent of content words deleted in the preparation of the cloze format varied from test to test, as is seen in Table 7.
Table 7. Percent of content words and function words deleted from cloze tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Translation</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NIV</th>
<th>NASB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passage 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content words</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Passage 4</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function words</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content words</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Passage 2, the readability score for the TEV as measured by the cloze test was substantially lower than would have been expected, and the percentage of deletions consisting of content words was much higher than for the other two versions. In Passage 4, both the TEV and the NIV ranked lower than the NASB and, in both cases, the percentage of deletions consisting of content words was again higher than those in the NASB. This would seem to substantiate the research done by Weaver and Bickley (cited in Hittleman, 1973) who found in part that the effect of increasing proportions of content words with the rest of the context intact was linear, which implied to them that the conceptual information needed to reduce uncertainty about reading test items was scattered widely throughout a passage. They conclude from
this that a deletion of nouns, verbs and adjectives reduces available conceptual information proportionately. (p. 785)

Their research, together with one of his earlier studies, led Hittleman to conclude that "cloze tests can be made more or less difficult by the proportion of content words deleted" (p. 785). He warns that the widely-used method of preparing cloze tests by deleting every nth word "might not produce comparable tests for comparing passages" (ibid.). This seems to be borne out in the current study.

Furthermore, each translation conveys the content of a certain passage in a slightly different way. As a result, deleting every nth word of these particular passages also did not produce entirely comparable tests. Therefore, it seemed that, rather than analyzing the data passage by passage, a more reasonable interpretation of the results would have to take into account the subjects' performance on the total number of items sampled from each translation.

Thus, the data taken as a whole were analyzed by a "repeated measures" method. Viewed in this way, the data were completely balanced, so the effects due to differences among passages could be ignored. The procedure follows:

1. For each case, the scores due to translation (treatment) were summed. The first subject received tests on Passages 1 and 4 in the NASB, Passages 2 and 4 in the TEV, and Passages 3 and 6 in the NIV. The proportions correct for
each translation were added together to produce three scores per subject.

2. The above procedure provided 36 observations and three scores per observation (3\times 36 = 108). In other words, each subject had three scores, one for each translation. The goal was to determine how much of the variance in each of the 108 scores was due to (a) differences between individuals, and (b) differences among the three translations.

Table 8. Analysis of variance between subjects and within subjects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ss</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between subjects</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.6926</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within subjects</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.0144</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.3078</td>
<td>0.1539</td>
<td>6.3126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trtm*subj(error)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1.7066</td>
<td>0.0244</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 8, the total sums of squares was 7.707, of which 5.6926 was due to differences between subjects. The remaining 2.0144 sums of squares were due to differences within subjects. Of this remaining 2.0144, the amount 0.3078 was due to the three translations (treatments). The remainder was due to the subject x treatment interactions. The resulting F-ratio of 6.3126 is significant at the 0.01 level. A note of caution is necessary here, since the between-subject effect
contains within it a "passage" effect, which this analysis was not able to separate. That is, some of the difference between individuals was due to the fact that they were responding to different combinations of passages, and some of the difference was due to individual ability.

On the basis of this statistical analysis, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the three means are not equal. In other words, there is a difference in the readability of the three translations as measured by student performance on cloze tests.

While the difference in cloze test scores between the TEV and the other two translations is statistically significant, the fact still remains that the difference between the NIV and the NASB is not as large as the readability formulas had indicated. Could unequal deletion of content words have the same effect on the overall averages of each translation as it had on Passages 2 and 4? As mentioned earlier, a count of content and function words in each passage revealed an almost constant proportion of 34% to 35% function words and 65% to 66% content words. Although the deletions in both the TEV and the NIV overall duplicate this proportion, the NASB tests deleted substantially fewer content words for a ratio of 58% content words to 42% function words. Such a ratio might indicate that the NASB tests were easier to complete than they otherwise might have been, because the greater number of
content words left intact provided a stronger context for the subjects to use in completing the blanks. As Hittleman (1973) has noted, "the cloze procedure as a test might have a difficulty factor which is separate and distinct from factors of readability within the reading passage itself" (p. 785).

Another factor which could have contributed to the inequality of the tests is the percentage of unfamiliar words deleted, where "unfamiliar words" are defined as those not on the Dale-Chall list of 3000 familiar words. Although it is not the sole factor, the number of unfamiliar words in a reading passage is an important indicator of difficulty. Therefore, the number of unfamiliar words in all six passages for each translation was totaled and showed that the TEV, NIV and NASB had 66, 84 and 119 unfamiliar words, respectively. When the passages were mutilated by deleting every nth word to produce cloze tests, however, the number of unfamiliar words deleted in each translation was not proportionate.

Both the TEV and NIV had a larger percentage of deleted words that could be assumed to be more difficult to replace than did the NASB. The NIV percentage was almost twice as high as the NASB. In addition, the NIV had the greatest percentage of all deletions consisting of unfamiliar words. This may have skewed the results by adding a difficulty factor which was not proportionate to the reading difficulty.
It could be assumed, therefore, that if the cloze tests could be prepared in such a way as to overcome the limitations discussed above, the results obtained in this study would show an even greater difference between the NIV and the NASB. In this case, a clear rank order might appear with the TEV as most edable and the NASB as least readable for learners of English as a foreign or second language.
CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the reading difficulty of three modern translations of the Bible and to determine which was the most readable for learners of English as a foreign or second language. A summary of the findings as related in the previous chapter follows.

1. In the analysis by readability formula using the computer, the translations all rated at or below eighth-grade level when measured for use by native speakers, with the TEV the most readable of the three, the NASB the least readable, and the NIV between them. Because of the nature of the formulas, this ranking was probably due to the level of complexity in the vocabulary as well as the sentence and word length found in the selected passages.

2. The results of the cloze procedure revealed a statistically significant difference between the group scores for the TEV translation and the group scores for the other two versions. A more definitive ranking might have occurred had I foreseen the inequality of the tests due to the deletion of differing percentages of function and content words as well as disproportionate deletions of unfamiliar words from each translation.

3. The TEV received an overall score of 57% correct responses, which would indicate that it is suitable for independent reading according to all of the criteria mentioned
in this study. However, the NIV score of 51.3% and the NASB score of 50.5% both fell below even Anderson's Independent reading cut-off point of 52%, so they are apparently best suited for use in an instructional setting. A group with a proficiency lower than the 500+ TOEFL scores of these subjects could be expected to choose a lower proportion of correct replacements on the cloze readability test.

One of the most interesting findings here was that both readability formulas and cloze tests have definite limitations for use in comparing alternate texts of identical content. The blindly mechanical nature of the computer analysis could not take into account the differences in syntactic complexity among the translations. A good example of this problem is found in the following parallel portions from Matthew 8:8:

TEV: "I do not deserve to have you come into my house."

NIV: "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof."

NASB: "I am not worthy for You to come under my roof."

All three sentences say essentially the same thing, and all have exactly 13 syllables, but they are not of equal syntactic complexity.

The cloze procedure was an attempt to provide a better method of analyzing the differences in difficulty due to varying style and expression. Because of the differences in syntax, however, the deletions created items of seemingly unequal difficulty in each translation. This can be seen in
the same three sentences as in the above example. In this case, underlined words represent deletions that actually occurred in the cloze tests on Passage 4.

TEV: "I do not deserve to have you come into my house."
NIV: "I do not deserve to have you come under my roof."
NASB: "I am not worthy for You to come under my roof."

This illustrates that, even though the NASB sentence is more syntactically complex than the other two, the blanks resulting from the cloze test are considerably easier. For example, there is only one pronoun which can precede am, so the answer to the first NASB blank is obvious. Both the NASB and NIV sentences contain the seldom-used phrase come under' my roof, but the NASB test deletes come, which should be less difficult to replace than the NIV deletion of roof.

Because problems in using the cloze procedure were found to be related to the deletion process and the difficulties inherent in testing comparable passages, further research suggested by this study might seek answers to the following questions:

1. Would the rank order of difficulty of these three translations as determined here by cloze tests differ for native speakers of English?

2. Would cloze tests of rhetorical styles other than narrative produce the same results?
3. Is it possible to produce truly comparable cloze tests on comparable passages? This could be investigated using three translations of the Bible or three graded alternate versions of a single text.

4. Does the deletion rate affect the ability to produce comparable cloze tests on material which covers the same content but differs in style or syntactic complexity? A previous study by Haskell (1975) investigated varying deletion rates to see if they produced tests of comparable difficulty over the same material, but here the focus would be on tests used to compare alternate texts of identical content.

A teacher of EFL in an overseas program operated by a religious organization might want to consider the implications for teaching which arise from this study. First, for instructional purposes, all three translations appear to be suitable for students in the 500+ TOEFL category. Students at a lower level of proficiency might find it less frustrating to work with the TEV. Second, given a choice between the NIV and the NASB, it might be wise to choose the NIV. Even though the total group scores do not differ significantly between these two translations, the internal evidence of the inequality of the tests themselves indicates that the NIV would score higher in readability if comparable tests were available.
REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Human Subjects Certification
The Iowa State University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research reviewed this project and concluded that the rights and welfare of the human subjects were adequately protected, that risks were outweighed by the potential benefits and expected value of the knowledge sought, that confidentiality of the data was assured, and that informed consent was obtained by appropriate procedures.

Readability Formula Computer Program
The assessment of the reading passages by readability formula was simplified by the use of Readability Calculations, a computer program which calculates readability according to nine formulas, available from Micro Power & Light Co., 12920 Hillcrest Road, #219, Dallas, Texas 75230.
APPENDIX A. SURVEY OF RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS
January, 1985
Karen Mann
312 Hillcrest
Ames, Iowa 50010

Gentlemen:

I am working on a Master's Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language in preparation for mission work in Japan. My Master's thesis will be a comparison of the readability of three (3) translations of the Bible. This comparison will be done by testing narrative passages on 45 to 50 International students from varied language backgrounds.

In order to complete preparations for the testing, I am requesting information from Evangelical Mission organizations such as yours. I would really appreciate it if you would take the time to answer the questions on the attached survey.

I have enclosed an addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience in returning the survey.

Thank you so much for your help. I would be glad to send you a copy of the results of the comparison if you so indicate on your survey.

Yours in Christ,

Karen Mann

km
enc
1. Name of your organization:

2. Countries in which you have seminaries or Bible Institutes:
   Japan, Pakistan, Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Zaire, Republic of Central Africa, Taiwan, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Korea, India, etc.

3. Do you have English language classes in the seminaries or Bible Institutes? Yes  No

4. Do you teach the Bible in English in any of these situations? Yes  No (except in individual English Bible study)

5. In which countries do you teach the Bible in English? Japan, Pakistan, Micronesia, Palau, North India, Hong Kong, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Western Caroline Islands

6. Which English translation(s) of the Bible do you use in teaching foreign nationals?
   NASB, NIV, RSV, TEV, LB, New Life Testament

7. Countries in which you have English language teaching centers:
   Japan (5), Taiwan (2), Truk, Palau in Micronesia

8. Do your staff members have any special training in Teaching English as a Second Language? Yes  No

9. If yes, how much and what kind? Master's in TESL, Certificate TESL

10. Do you use the Bible as a medium of instruction in the English language classes? Yes  No

11. If yes, which translation do you use? NASB, NIV, TEV, RSV, LB
    One respondent writes own simplified English version

12. Please put an "x" by each of your three top choices for Bible translations to use with people of other languages and cultures:
   ___ King James Version
   ___ New American Standard
   ___ Revised Standard Version
   ___ The Living Bible (paraphrase)
   ___ Today's English (Good News)
   ___ Berkley
   ___ New International Version
   ___ Other

13. Do you want to be notified of the results of this study? Yes  No

14. If yes, please state name and mailing address:
APPENDIX B. INTERPRETATION OF FLESCH READING EASE SCORES

(Flesch, 1949, pp. 149-150)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R. E. Score</th>
<th>Description of style</th>
<th>Typical magazine</th>
<th>Syllables/100 words</th>
<th>Average sentence length</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 to 100</td>
<td>very easy</td>
<td>comics</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 to 90</td>
<td>easy</td>
<td>pulp fiction</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 to 80</td>
<td>fairly easy</td>
<td>slick fiction</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 70</td>
<td>standard</td>
<td>digests, Time, mass non-fiction</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 to 60</td>
<td>fairly difficult</td>
<td>Harper's, Atlantic</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 50</td>
<td>difficult</td>
<td>academic, scholarly</td>
<td>167</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 to 30</td>
<td>very difficult</td>
<td>scientific, professional</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C. CLOZE TEST MATERIALS

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please read through each passage one time before you write any answers.

Each blank represents a missing word. The length of the blank line has no relationship to the length of the missing word. Some words may be one or two letters long, while other words may have many letters.

The missing word will never be a proper noun (i.e. a person's name, the name of a city, etc.)

After you have read through the passage once, go back to the beginning and fill in each blank with the word that you think is missing. Try to fill in every blank, even if you feel that it is just a guess.

Complete your work on one passage before you move on to the next one. There are six (6) passages in all.

REMEMBER, we are not testing your ability to read. We are testing whether or not the passage is easy to read.
When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes and went out into the city, wailing loudly and bitterly. But he went only as far as the king's gate, because no one in sackcloth was allowed to enter. In every province to which the king's order came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with ashes, weeping and wailing. Many lay on sackcloth and ashes.

When Esther's maids and eunuchs told her about Mordecai, she was great distress. She sent clothes for him to put on instead of his sackcloth, but he would not accept them. Esther summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs to attend her, and ordered him find out what was troubling Mordecai and Esther.

So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the square of the city in front of the king's gate. Mordecai told him everything had happened to him, including the amount of money Haman had promised to into the royal treasury for the annihilation of the Jews. He also gave him copy of the text of the for their annihilation, which had been in Susa, to show to Esther and explain to her, and he told him urge her to go into the presence to beg for mercy and with him for her people.
But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Now God had caused the official to favor and sympathy to Daniel, but the told Daniel, "I am afraid of my the king, who has assigned your and drink. Why should he see looking worse than the other young your age? The king would then my head because of you."

Daniel then to the guard whom the chief had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please test servants for ten days: Give us but vegetables to eat and water drink. Then compare our appearance with of the young men who eat royal food, and treat your servants accordance with what you see." So agreed to this and tested them ten days.

At the end of ten days they looked healthier and nourished than any of the young who ate the royal food. So guard took away their choice food the wine they were to drink gave them vegetables instead.
The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai:
"Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it,
because its wickedness has come up before me."

But Jonah ran away from the Lord and ____________
for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where ____________
found a ship bound for that ____________. After paying
the fare, he went ____________ and sailed for Tarshish
to flee from ____________ Lord.

Then the Lord sent a great wind ____________ the
sea, and such a violent ____________ arose that the
ship threatened to ____________ up. All the sailors were
afraid ____________ each cried out to his own _________.
And they threw the cargo into ____________ sea to
lighten the ship.

But Jonah ____________ gone below deck, where he lay
___________ and fell into a deep sleep. ____________
captain went to him and said, "___________ can you
sleep? Get up and ____________ on your god! Maybe he
will ____________ notice of us, and we will ____________
perish."

Then the sailors said to ____________ other, "Come,
let us cast lots ____________ find out who is responsible
for ____________ calamity." They cast lots and the
___________ fell on Jonah.

So they asked him, "___________ us, who is
responsible for making ____________ this trouble for us?
What do ____________ do? Where do you come from?
___________ is your country? From what people ____________
you?
When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at _______________ paralyzed and in terrible suffering."

Jesus said _______________ him, "I will go and heal _______________."

The centurion replied, "Lord I do not _______________ to have you come under my _______________. But just say the word, and _______________ servant will be healed. For I _______________ am a man under authority, with _______________ under me. I tell this one, '______________,' and he goes; and that one, '______________,' and he comes. I say to _______________ servant, 'Do this,' and he does _______________."

When Jesus heard this, he was astonished _______________ said to those following him, "I _______________ you the truth, I have not _______________ anyone in Israel with such great faith. _______________ say to you that many will _______________ from the east and the west, _______________ will take their places at the _______________ with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of _______________. But the subjects of the kingdom _______________ be thrown outside, into the darkness, _______________ there will be weeping and gnashing _______________ teeth."

Then Jesus said to the centurion, "______________!" It will be done just as _______________ believed it would." And his servant _______________ healed at that very hour.
On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away the tomb, but when they entered, did not find the body of Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, two men in clothes that gleamed lightning stood beside them. In their the women bowed down with their to the ground, but the men to them, "Why do you look the living among the dead? He not here; he has risen! Remember he told you, while he was with you in Galilee: 'The Son of must be delivered into the hands sinful men, be crucified and on third day be raised again.'" Then remembered his words.

When they came from the tomb, they told all things to the Eleven and to the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother James, and the others with them who this to the apostles. But they not believe the women, because their seemed to them like nonsense.
One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth being carried to the temple gate Beautiful, where he was put every to beg from those going into temple courts. When he saw Peter and John to enter, he asked them for . Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Peter said, "Look at us!" So the gave them his attention, expecting to something from them.

Then Peter said, "Silver gold I do not have, but I have I give you. In name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him the right hand, he helped him , and instantly the man's feet and became strong. He jumped to his and began to walk. Then he with them into the temple courts, and jumping, and praising God. When all people saw him walking and praising God, recognized him as the same man used to sit begging at the gate called Beautiful, and they were with wonder and amazement at what happened to him.
When Mordecai learned of all that had been done, he tore his clothes in anguish. Then he dressed in sackcloth, covered his head with ashes, and walked through the city, wailing loudly and bitterly, until he came to the entrance of the palace. He did not go because no one wearing sackcloth was inside. Throughout all the provinces, wherever king's proclamation was made known, there loud mourning among the Jews. They fasted, wailed, and most of them put sackcloth and lay in ashes.

When Esther's girls and eunuchs told her what Mordecai doing, she was deeply disturbed. She Mordecai some clothes to put on instead the sackcloth, but he would not them. Then she called Hathach, one of palace eunuchs appointed as her servant the king, and told him to to Mordecai and find out what was and why. Hathach went to Mordecai in the square at the entrance. Mordecai told him everything that had happened him and just how much money Haman promised to put into the royal if all the Jews were killed. He Hathach a copy of the proclamation that been issued in Susa, ordering the destruction the Jews. Mordecai asked him to take it Esther, explain the situation to her, and beg him to have mercy her people.
Daniel made up his mind not to let himself become ritually unclean by eating the food and drinking the wine of the royal court, so he asked Ashpenaz to help him, and God made Ashpenaz sympathetic to Daniel. Ashpenaz, however, was ________ of the king, so he said ________
Daniel, "The king has decided what you ________ to eat and drink, and if ________ don't look as fit as the ________ young men, he may kill me."
Daniel went to the guard whom Ashpenaz had ________ in charge of him and his three ________.
"Test us for ten days," he ________.
"Give us vegetables to eat and ________ to drink. Then compare us with ________ young men who are eating the ________ of the royal court, and base ________ decision on how we look."
He ________ to let them try it for ________ days. When the time was up, ________ looked healthier and stronger than all ________ who had been eating the royal ________.
So from then on the guard ________ them continue to eat vegetables instead ________ what the king provided.
One day the Lord spoke to Jonah son of Amittai. He said, "Go to Nineveh, that great city, and speak out against it; I am aware of how wicked its people are." Jonah, however, set out in the opposite ___________ in order to get away from ___________ Lord. He went to Joppa, where he found ___________ ship about to go to Spain. He ___________ his fare and went aboard with ___________ crew to sail to Spain, where he ___________ be away from the Lord.

But the Lord ___________ a strong wind on the sea, ___________ the storm was so violent that ___________ ship was in danger of breaking ___________. The sailors were terrified and cried ___________ for help, each one to his ___________ god. Then, in order to lessen ___________ danger, they threw the cargo overboard. ___________, Jonah had gone below and was lying ___________ the ship's hold, sound asleep.

The ___________ found him there and said to ___________, "What are you doing asleep? Get ___________ and pray to your god for ___________. Maybe he will feel sorry for ___________ and spare our lives."

The sailors ___________ to each other, "Let's draw lots ___________ find out who is to blame ___________ getting us into this danger." They ___________ so, and Jonah's name was drawn. So ___________ said to him, "Now, then, tell ___________! Who is to blame for this? ___________ are you doing here? What country ___________ you come from? What is your ___________?"
When Jesus entered Capernaum, a Roman officer met him and begged for help: "Sir, my servant is sick in ________ at home, unable to move and _________ terribly."

"I will go and make _________ well," Jesus said.

"Oh no, sir," answered _________ officer, "I do not deserve to _________ you come into my house. Just _________ the order, and my servant will _________ well. I, too, am a man _________ the authority of superior officers, and _________ have soldiers under me. I order _________ one, 'Go!' and he goes; and _________ order that one, 'Come!' and he _________; and I order my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it."

When Jesus heard _________, he was surprised and said to _________ people following him, "I tell you, _________ have never found anyone in Israel with _________ like this. I assure you that _________ will come from the east and _________ west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob _________ the feast in the Kingdom of _________. But those who should be in _________ Kingdom will be thrown out into _________ darkness, where they will cry and _________ their teeth."

Then Jesus said to the _________, "Go home, and what you believe _________ be done for you."

And the _________ servant was healed that very moment.
Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away _______ the entrance to the tomb, so _______ went in; but they did not _______ the body of the Lord Jesus. They stood _______ puzzled about this, when suddenly two _______ in bright, shining clothes stood by _______. Full of fear, the women bowed _______ to the ground, as the men _______ to them, "Why are you looking _______ the dead for one who is _______? He is not here; he has _______ raised. Remember what he said to _______ while he was in Galilee: 'The Son _______ Man must be handed over to _______ men, be crucified, and three days _______ rise to life.'"

Then the women _______ his words, returned from the tomb, _______ told all these things to the eleven _______ and all the rest. The women _______ Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; they and _______ other women with them told these _______ to the apostles. But the apostles _______ that what the women said was _______, and they did not believe them.
One day Peter and John went to the Temple at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour for prayer. There at the Beautiful Gate, as _______ was called, was a man who _______ been lame all his life. Every _______ he was carried to the gate _______ beg for money from the people _______ were going into the Temple. When _______ saw Peter and John going in, he begged _______ to give him something. They looked _______ at him, and Peter said, "Look at us!" So he looked at them, expecting _______ get something from them. But Peter said _______ him, "I have no money at _______, but I give you what I _______: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I _______ you to get up and walk!" _______ he took him by his right _______ and helped him up. At once _______ man's feet and ankles became strong; _______ jumped up, stood on his feet, _______ started walking around. Then he went _______ the Temple with them, walking and _______ and praising God. The people there saw _______ walking and praising God, and when they _______ him as the beggar who had _______ at the Beautiful Gate, they were _______ surprised and amazed at what had _______ to him.
When Mordecai learned all that had been done, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city and wailed loudly and bitterly. And he went as far as the king's gate, for no one was enter the king's gate clothed in sackcloth and ashes. And in each and every province the command and decree of the came, there was great mourning among Jews, with fasting, weeping, and wailing; and lay on sackcloth and ashes.

Then Esther's and her eunuchs came and told , and the queen writhed in great . And she sent garments to clothe Mordecai he might remove his sackcloth from , but he did not accept them. Esther summoned Hathach from the king's eunuchs, whom king had appointed to attend her, ordered him to go to Mordecai to what this was and why it .

So Hathach went out to Mordecai to the square in front of the king's gate. And Mordecai told him all that had to him, and the exact amount money that Haman had promised to pay the king's treasures for the destruction the Jews. He also gave him a of the text of the edict had been issued in Susa for their , that he might show Esther and inform , and to order her to go to the king to implore his and to plead with him for people.
But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in sight of the commander of the officials, and the commander of the officials spoke to Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your position and your drink; for why should your faces seem haggard in my eyes the youths who are your own? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king."

But Daniel said the overseer whom the commander of officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, "Please your servants for ten days, and us be given some vegetables to and water to drink. Then let appearance be observed in your presence, the appearance of the youths who eating the king's choice food; and with your servants according to what you see."

So he listened to them this matter and tested them for days. And at the end of days their appearance seemed better and were fatter than all the youths had been eating the king's choice food.

So the overseer continued to withhold choice food and the wine they to drink, and kept giving them.
The word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me."

But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish the presence of the Lord. So he down to Joppa, found a ship which going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and down into it to go with to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

the Lord hurled a great wind on sea and there was a great on the sea so that the was about to break up. Then sailors became afraid, and every man to his god, and they threw cargo which was in the ship the sea to lighten it for. But Jonah had gone below into the of the ship, lain down, and sound asleep.

So the captain approached and said, "How is it that are sleeping? Get up, call on god. Perhaps your god will be about us so that we will perish."

And each man said to mate, "Come, let us cast lots we may learn on whose account calamity has struck us." So they lots and the lot fell on Jonah.

they said to him, "Tell us! On whose account has this calamity us? What is your occupation? And do you come from? What is country? From what people are you?"
And when He had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, entreating Him, and saying, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at __________, suffering great pain."

And He said __________ to him, "I will come and heal __________."

But the centurion answered and said, "Lord, __________ am not worthy for You to __________ under my roof, but just say __________ word, and my servant will be __________. For I, too, am a man __________ authority, with soldiers under me; and __________ say to this one, 'Go!' and __________ goes, and to another, 'Come!' and __________ comes, and to my slave, 'Do __________!' and he does it."

Now when Jesus __________ this, He marveled, and said to __________ who were following, "Truly I say __________ you, I have not found such __________ faith with anyone in Israel. And I __________ to you, that many shall come __________ east and west, and recline at __________ table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the __________ of heaven; but the sons of __________ kingdom shall be cast out into __________ outer darkness; in that place there __________ be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

__________ Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your __________; let it be done to you __________ you have believed." And the servant __________ healed that very hour.
Luke 24

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled __________ from the tomb, but when they __________, they did not find the body __________ the Lord Jesus. And it happened that while __________ were perplexed about this, behold, two __________ suddenly stood near them in dazzling __________; and as the women were terrified __________ bowed their faces to the ground, ________ men said to them, "Why do __________ seek the living One among the __________? He is not here, but He __________ risen. Remember how He spoke to __________ while He was still in Galilee, saying __________ the Son of Man must be __________ into the hands of sinful men, __________ be crucified, and the third day __________ again."

And they remembered His words, __________ returned from the tomb and reported __________ these things to the eleven and __________ all the rest.

Now they were Mary Magdalene __________ Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the __________ women with them were telling these __________ to the apostles. And these words __________ to them as nonsense, and they __________ not believe them.
Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had lame from his mother's womb was carried along, whom they used to down every day at the gate the temple which is called Beautiful, order to beg alms of those were entering the temple.

And when saw Peter and John about to go into temple, he began asking to receive . And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze him and said, "Look at us!") he began to give them his, expecting to receive something from them.

Peter said, "I do not possess silver gold, but what I do have give to you: In the name Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" And seizing him by right hand, he raised him up; immediately his feet and his ankles strengthened. And with a leap, he upright and began to walk; and entered the temple with them, walking leaping and praising God.

And all the saw him walking and praising God; and were taking note of him as the one who used to sit the Beautiful Gate of the temple beg alms, and they were filled wonder and amazement at what had to him.