

浙江师范大学

硕士学位论文

The Power of Words in the Bible: A Study of Its
Inspirations on Aspects of Language

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摘要

在宗教、政治、考古学、文学、艺术、心理学、哲学和语言学各领域圣经研究都有深入地发展。其中圣经对语言研究的贡献主要体现的圣经的翻译研究、圣经的文学性研究和圣经文本的语言启示。通过语言人民能了解一个民族的思想精髓。如果能挖掘出圣经中有关语言方面的任何陈述。人们就能够了解圣经作者对人类语言本质是怎样理解的。关键是如何忠实地解读文本的本意。论文通过解读圣经英译版本本文试图能找出书中有关语言方面的陈述。

因此本文从圣经文本出发论及四大语言问题。首先关注的是圣经中有关语言起源的陈述，从中引出四方面的语言探讨。逐句解读《创世记》中关于人类语言的第一次描写后，本论文从圣经文本中得出其基本含义，即圣经中清楚写明的是上帝造了一个有灵的活人亚当而没有直接为亚当创造了人类语言。由于圣经文本中也找不到依据，论文认为神授说是荒唐的。根据《创世记》中多处的语言线索表明命名是该书中能找到的最早的人类语言活动。更重要的是圣经中这种早期的语言（命名）既可以是任意的又可以是非任意的。随之，论文考察了圣经中关于语言分化的陈述即巴别塔的故事。并发现其中也包含了合理的观点：语言的统一大大有助于人们联合起来致力于实现各种创造活动。同时在这个故事中也第一次明确提出来人类具有想象力，并写明上帝恐怕人类使用同一语言就能够尽情实现他们所能想到的任何事情。论文关注的第三大方面是：圣经中有关语言的真假问题及所谓谎言。通过分析圣经本身对谎言的评语和《创世记》中重大的说谎事件，论文意欲反映圣经中的谎言起源和其他相关方面比如谎言的普遍性、说谎的内因和动机。论文最后讨论的另一个古老的语言话题是话语的力量。多数语言学家理解为语言拜物教及人们相信语言有神奇的魔力。为此本论文强调圣经文本本身坚决反对这类迷信。然而可悲的是这一迷信一直为古代人类顽固地坚信着甚至至今存在于一些现代人中。由此论文从圣经文本对话语力量的有关陈述出发提出一个更实际的想法。以上所有问题的探讨为要挖掘出圣经在语言领域的启示，使得人们能从一个新的角度看人类语言和当今西方语言理论的建构和实践。

探讨上述问题之后，以又聋又瞎又哑的 **Helen Keller** 为例，论文结尾部分提议：

语言本质上是实现人类各种施事行为的必要的精神工具，而人的整个肉体是做事的必要的物质工具。正如蜘蛛生来就能织网捕食，这是它的生存方式；人的本质也在于人生来具有说话的潜质，并且要使用语言在浩瀚宇宙中建立自己的国度，或寻求真理、或探索奥秘、或追求理想。这也应当是人的生存方式，不然后人将失去自身存在的真正价值。

关键词： 启示，语言起源，分化，说谎，话语的力量

Abstract

The study on the Holy Bible varied and respectively underwent a profound development in several fields of religion, politics, archaeology, literature, arts, psychology, philosophy and linguistics. And its contribution to the study of language stems from three fields: the scholarly studies of biblical translation, biblical literature and biblical inspirations on language. Through a language, a people's thought and soul are learned. If any clues about aspects of language can be found in the Holy Bible, as a body of written language, it displays the biblical writers' understanding of the nature of human language. What matters is how to honestly interpret the original meaning of the biblical text. The thesis resorts to reread the English Version of the Bible in order to discover what is presented about aspects of language in the book.

Therefore, four major language problems are touched upon from the perspective of the Bible. At first the thesis focuses on the Bible's presentation about the origin of language, which actually revolves four linguistic themes. Based on the literal meaning of language Tale One in *Genesis*, certain conclusion is drawn that it is clearly written in the Bible that God created Adam into a living soul instead of creating human language directly for Adam. Therefore with no scriptural proof, the divine source hypothesis appears ridiculous. It can be revealed by many linguistic clues that naming is the most original language that can be found in *Genesis*. More importantly, the design feature of original naming in the book can be either arbitrary or iconical. Later the thesis conducts an examination on the Bible's presentation about the differentiation of language which is called tale of the Babel Tower. It is discovered that the famous tale contains a reasonable point of view that one uniformed language would be of great help to unite all people into effective efforts of all kinds of creations. At the same time, the imagination power possessed by mankind is directly pointed out for the first time in the Bible. It is also put down that God did fear that nothing that people had imagined to do will be restrained

from them who had one language. The third focus then turns to the falsity of language, an important speech act – lies. By analyzing biblical comments on lies and major lying events in Genesis, the thesis demonstrates the origin of lies reflected by the Bible and other important aspects of lies such as the prevalence of lies among people, the inner cause of making a lie and the intentions of lies. The last discussion approaches another age-old linguistic topic, the power of words, which was interpreted by most linguists as language fetishism – a belief in the magic power of language. The thesis stresses that the Bible itself resolutely oppose such superstition which however was miserably held firmly and stupidly by the ancient people and even the moderns. Hence a more realistic perspective to the power of words is provided on the basis of the Bible's presentation in this respect. All of these endeavors attempt to uncover the Bible's inspirations on linguistics which may lead to a fresh perspective both on human language and on the current linguistic theorizing and practice in the West.

At the end of the above discussion comes the final but not the least part. Supported by the instances of Helen Keller, the deaf-blind mute, it is proposed that language in essence be a necessary spiritual tool to realize all human desires of doing things and the whole physical human body is a necessary material tool of doing things. The nature of human language is that it is a mode of living of human beings. Like the spider is born to weave net to seek food all its life, human beings are born with a faculty of language. Via language in use, they build their own kingdom, pursuing their ideals, seeking truth, or exploring the unknown world of the entire universe, or the like. Otherwise their existence will become worthless indeed.

Key words: inspiration, origin of language, differentiation, lying, word power

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According to the Bible: 'In the beginning was the Word'. According to the Talmud: 'God created the world by a Word, instantaneously, without toil or pains'. Whatever more mystical meaning these pieces of scripture might have, they both point to the primacy of language in the way human beings conceive of the world.

So language can be seen as distinctive because of its intricate association with the human mind and with human society.

---- H. G. Widdowson

Mother had so carried me away that I wanted to die that very night and meet Jesus.

--- Charlie Chaplin

Feeling the power of words? Then think of how the words of Jesus, Karl Marx, Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong and many other historic figures powered upon their faithful followers.

--- Author of the thesis

Chapter I Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the research

In recent years, a unique book, the Holy Bible, has frequently caught Chinese researchers' increasing attention. Although the majority of the Chinese scholars are not yet quite familiar with its content, they have heard about its fame. The problem is they find it difficult to read mostly because of its obscurity and too many repetitions in meaning; and they will be likely to fail to appreciate its spiritual essence and so less likely to know how and to what extent the Western people was Bible-civilized in culture and character. It is through a thorough biblical reading and three major incidents that the author is surprised to discover the close relation between the Bible and the prosperity of Western culture.

Firstly, it is during my teaching career that I often encounter with some

difficulties due to a culture barrier – uninformed-ness by the Bible. As it is a long story to tell in here because of a limitation of space, an example is singled out for the reader's information. Even when they are well-informed with biblical tales, Bible-uncivilized Chinese could scarcely comprehend the deep moral sense of the line of Michael Jackson's song *We Are the World*:

As God has shown us,
By turning stones to bread
So we all must lend a helping hand.

(Adapted from *College English: Integrated Course 3 Student's Book*) (Li Yinghua, et al. 2002:326)

Because most Chinese are not firmly or not a bit convinced by the religious conviction in God, they seldom sense strongly the western feel for love through those words ("By turning stones to bread" is not a mere miracle of God, but a love testimony between God and his people.) Desired by the author, a linguistic study of the Bible may be of crucial help to people in their second language teaching when the culture barrier is in the clear.

Secondly, I gradually realized the fact that for the past two thousands of years, the Bible, once as a greatest religious book and now a body of literature, has inspired countless people and shaped their outlooks, even dominated their daily behaviors. A linguistic study on the text of the book can release more detailed facts about common people's views on life meaning and be supportive in improving Chinese learners' understanding the current and the past construction of Jewish and Western significant theories and practice. After a thorough study of the spirit of the Bible, Chinese researchers will not be surprised at its popularity in linguistics and literature fields, for example, linguist H. G. Widdowson (1996:3) explained language's role in human creative activities upon the material world by quoting the verse in the Bible (See the first quotation above). Benjamin Walter (Benjamin, 1988:471, cited from Yuan Wenbin, 2006:14) claimed his linguistic views had all revolved from the theology of

the Bible. Northrop Frye^①, whose *Anatomy of Criticism* is the third most frequently cited twentieth century work in the arts and humanities, tells us that "in a sense all my critical work ..., has revolved around the Bible." Meanwhile, J. Derrida's (1985) theory of Deconstruction was an inspiration of the Bible's language story. Nor would Chinese people be astonished about the power of biblical words upon the lives of so many common people such as Charlie Chaplin, Helen Keller, both of whom later became very famous for their special accomplishments. Set the second quotation above for example, Charlie Chaplin recalled his childhood days living with his religious mother in his autobiography:

... but she gave the most luminous and appealing interpretation of Christ that I have ever heard or seen. She spoke of His tolerant understanding; of the woman who had sinned and...Mother had so carried me away that I wanted to die that very night and meet Jesus. But Mother was not so enthusiastic. "Jesus wants you to live first and fulfill your destiny here," she said. In that dark room in the basement at Oakley Street, Mother illuminated to me the kindest light this world has ever known, which has endowed literature and the theatre with their greatest and richest themes: love, pity and humanity.

(1964:24-26)

Accordingly, it is not too exaggerating to affirm that Western people have been long Bible-civilized for more than thousands of years since the Greek civilization had fallen down. As a consequence, the book persistently extends its provocative influence on different people in different countries in varied fields. The role of the Bible, as a written language itself, definitely reflects what the role of language has played in human history in a similar way. It possesses a unique academic value, about which Lewis Aron PhD (2004) once wrote an article *God's Influence on My Psychoanalytic Vision and Values* to show the subtle ways in which religious ideas may influence psychoanalytic theorizing and practice. Did or Does the Bible similarly exert its

^① Cited from the website: <http://www.jinfo.org/Literature.html>.

influence on the shaping of people's linguistic vision and values? The answer is positive when there are a good number of prominent Jewish linguists² in the world whose Hebrew Bible was the primary source of Jewish influence on linguistic thought (not to mention the even larger groups of linguists who believe in Christianity). To name a few of them, **Émile Benveniste**, **Leonard Bloomfield**, **Franz Boas**, **Jerome Bruner**, **Noam Chomsky**, **Jacques Derrida**, **Aron Dolgopolsky**, **Erving Goffman**, **Joseph Greenberg**, **Morris Halle**, **Zellig Harris**, **Ray Jackendoff**, **Roman Jakobson**, **William Labov**, **George Lakoff**, **Edward Sapir**, **Alfred Tarski**, **Ludwig Wittgenstein**, **Ludwik Zamenhof**, **Joshua Fishman**, **Edmund Husserl**, and so on. (The bold-faced names are emphasized by the author.)

As far as information goes, to conduct a linguistic research on the book is not unnecessary but surprisingly interesting and valuable because any involved findings possibly improve a better understanding of aspects of human language, especially the power of biblical words upon modern linguistics.

1.2 Background of the research

1.2.1 Textualization and worldwide popularity of the Bible

Generally speaking, the textualization of the Bible (Old and New Testament) had come through six important periods in a long history. (Keene, 2005) It is not a single book but a collection of 66 books or scrolls (39 books in Old Testament and 27 in New Testament) by the hands of over 40 different writers at different times of over a thousand year. (Yu Yelu, 2004) The earliest parts (formed before B.C. 1200 – the late period of Shang Dynasty of ancient China) were the first five books of Moses which consisted of *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*, among which the book of *Genesis* was also the first and essential part of *Koran* –the sacred text of Islam, considered by Moslems to contain the revelations of God to Mohammed. The

² To know more about Jewish linguists, see the website: <http://www.jinfo.org/Linguists.html>. To know more stories of Jewish contributions to world civilization, these books and websites are available: *The Encyclopedia Judaica Chinese Edition* by Xu Xin and Ling Jiyao, Helen Wang's book *The Bible of Jewish Home-education*, *The Hinges of History*, Volume II by Thomas Cahill, *A History of the Jews* by Paul Johnson in 1987, <http://www.jinfo.org>, etc.

Hebrew Bible (Old Testament of the Bible) was only accepted by the majority of Jews according to the Jewish tradition. For various reasons after the widespread of the whole book, people with different doctrines subdivided into different religious communities because of their different interpretation of the Bible lore. They are fundamental Christian, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, liberal Protestants, Anglian and Jewish faiths[®]. Despite of these, the Bible became central in western people's lives throughout medieval times and is still influential over the world. (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 2007) Regardless of their skin color, social position, there are a large number of biblical adherents in different countries and regions[®]. As in China, Christian faith was introduced even earlier before the Tang Dynasty which later was called Jing Jiao – Nestorianism. (Zhang Xushan, 2005) At present, it is roughly estimated that there are over 300 to 400 million Christians in China, and about 2.1 billion Christians in the world. (Edward Cody, 2007:A15, Bowen Liu, 2007) Such enduring and substantial influence of the book upon the world civilization has existed for more than three thousand years and probably will continue on, which makes itself a fascinating book: mysterious in theological sense, sparkled with imaginations in literary circles, filled with tremendous world knowledge in science, and full of inspirations on the study of language.

1.2.2 The Bible's contribution to the study of language

As a body of written language, the Bible definitely captivated scholars' frequent attention. Biblical study varied and respectively underwent a profound development in several fields of religion, politics, archaeology, literature, arts, psychology, philosophy and linguistics. To display its contribution to the study of language in a broad sense, three directions should not be ignored: the scholarly studies of biblical translation, biblical literature and linguistic turn in philosophy.

Bassnett, Susan (1995) pointed out most translation theories were founded on the

[®] To know more about major branches of Christianity in the world, http://www.adherents.com/adh_branches.html is available with the most current adherents' numbers of each branch of major religions.

[®] More detailed information on contemporary Christianity around the world is supplied on Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.'s sub-webpage: <http://www.britannica.com/eb/article-67450/Christianity> and other links.

theoretical research of both biblical translation – an important branch of worldwide translation practice, and contemporary significant translators, such as Nida, E. A. who was famous for his biblical translation along with his translation theories and proposals. The Bible translators, benefited from their practice of rendering the Bible into different languages, advanced such ideas as “adherence to the original meaning”, “a translator’s two-fold duty”, “non-literal translation”, “literary beauty”, which are credited as great part of the heritage of translation theories. Such biblical translation is definitely closely related to the study of different languages of the world just as the study of biblical literature does help to an extensive comprehension of languages. Both of them frequently encouraged a comparative study on language varieties, motivating a deeper exploration of many language topics, such as the functions of language, features of language, sound patterns of language, discourse analysis, language history and change, and so on.

The establishment of the Bible as a greatest masterpiece of literature by Frye, N (1981) triggered a great deal of research on the linguistic relations between the Bible and the most prominent writers, such as Shakespeare[®], William Blake, Frye, Heinrich Heine, Dante, John Milton, George Steiner, Franz Kafka, Marcel Proust, Thomas Mann, Boris Pasternak, Arthur Koestler, Saul Bellow, Harold Pinter; even some greatest thinkers, philosophers, or scientists, such as Karl Marx[®], Charles Darwin[®], Christopher Columbus, Albert Einstein, Newton, Sir Isaac[®], et al. (the first four of them were Jewish) All such researches led to a fresh exposition on the Bible’s verbal styles and spiritual power upon human beings. Chinese professor Liu Hongyi (2004:90-96) was also attracted by the Bible’s special contribution to world civilization and summarized five aspects of Jewish Bible’s values in *Jewish Bible’s*

[®] See *Shakespeare and the Bible*, by Steven Marx (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2000, Ch. 2). *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Tragedies*, by Naseeb Shaheen (University of Delaware Press, Newark, DE, 1987); *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s History Plays*, by Naseeb Shaheen (University of Delaware Press, Newark, DE, 1989); *Biblical References in Shakespeare’s Comedies*, by Naseeb Shaheen (University of Delaware Press, Newark, DE, 1993); and *Biblical Influences in Shakespeare’s Great Tragedies*, by Peter Milward (University of Indiana Press, Bloomington, 1987).

[®] To know more about Karl Marx, see William H. Blanchard, *Karl Marx and the Jewish Question*, Political Psychology, Vol. 5, No.3, 1984, pp. 365-374.

[®] Link to the webpage: <http://www.aboutdarwin.com/darwin/WhoWas.html> to find out more religious impact on him.

[®] See the website: <http://www.newton.cam.ac.uk/newlife.html>

Internationality and Its Link with Modern Civilization.

Overseas modern philosophical study has turned its focus on human language lately. (Qian Guanlian, 2005, Xu Youyu, 2004, Cai Shushan, 2001:17-27) Such a linguistic turn of philosophy push the linguistic philosophy study of the Bible to a new higher position. Scholars have noticed that it was the linguistic turn that actually brought about the naissance of Morphology, Semantics, Pragmatics, linguistic logics, or other new branches and promoted their advance. (Cai Shushan, 2001:18-22) As people realized the extraordinary significance of symbolic languages – the artificial languages in research, the current philosophers place human artificial languages as the most important objects of their study considering them as a necessary tool of developing modern science and of the cognition of the universe. Quite coincidentally, three thousands of years ago the Bible highly valued the words of God in an extreme profound sense: (*John 1:1*) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Does such statement influenced upon those Western researchers in their shaping of linguistic or philosophic views? Though as far as the author knows, no one tempted to make a full-scale conclusion on the Bible’s contribution to the study of language singly from the linguistic perspective. Whoever has thoroughly read and studied the Bible would be surprised to discover that people’s speech acts and their outlooks were or are indispensably influenced more or less by the unseen hand of the book which survives at its door till today, while most of them are quite unconscious of the extent or even not a bit aware of the depth.

1.3 Methods and scopes of the research

By collecting information about the religious background of significant figures in history and their practice of religion in life, the astonishing fact can be revealed to public that the Bible’s pervasive influence is far-reaching to the world civilization beyond the expectation of most researchers. However, the thesis is not attempted to argue on how deep the book influenced people in all fields of politics, religion, cultures, science or the other, but only restricted to a linguistic discussion of a few

age-old language problems inspired by the Bible concerning the origin of language, differentiation of language, lies, language fetishism, word power and so on. By such narrowing down the range of research, one can catch a glimpse of the spirit of the Bible and slightly feel the power of words in the book. It shall be emphasized that the thesis is not to be made just a fine collection of the linguistic knowledge, but a hopefully beneficial stimulation to a deeper meditation on the nature of language in a human life. Those mentioned topics are approached in a quality-analytical way in the field of linguistics. Many questions may come out during the study: What kind of descriptions of language has been made in the book? Did people once misunderstand what is said in it? What are the possible perspectives of ancient people on language reflected in the text? What are the descriptions of the powers of the words in the Bible itself? The descriptive approach is applied objectively. All the biblical texts are adapted from the KJV (King James Version) Bible. Originally compiled in 1616, it is accepted as the most authorized English version Bible among both the adherents and other scholars. All the comprehension and analysis are based on an examination on the literal meaning of the text, thus case study is another major method. A quantitative method by statistics might be occasionally employed in the analysis of text-meaning.

1.4 Organization of the thesis

It is known that all masterpieces of natural and social science, arts and humanities, or religions are cherished as among the greatest treasures of humankind. Therefore, the thesis first offers a literature review of the study of language and biblical study after a necessary historical presentation of the role of language played in human history in Chapter II. Then the following chapters except the last resort to a detailed objective analysis of aspects of language presented in the Bible. Before trying finding out its inspirations on those questions, a thorough reading of the Bible is repeated and supplemented with many other related readings in case that none of the words in the Bible is misinterpreted. Based on such careful and analytical reading comprehension on the literary meaning of its text, several corrections are conducted to

some misinterpretations of its language which once led to wrong convictions. At the same time several inspirations arise from the text of the Bible just as those Chinese masterpieces written by Confucius, Mencius, Lao-tzu, in Spring and Autumn Period and Warring States Period, which still retain their scholarly significance for modern researchers. Chapter III deals with the inspiration on the origin of human language and thoroughly discusses over four linguistic themes: who created human language, what the form and design feature of original language might be, whether human language is an endowment or accomplishment, and the importance of naming; Chapter IV tentatively sets on the Bible's inspirations on differentiation of language; Chapter V provides a close examination on an important human speech act – lies in the Bible where its inspirations on the origin of lies, the harm of lies and the cause of lies are studied; and Chapter VI turns to a discussion of language fetishism revolved from the Bible and later brings out a presentation on power of words inspired by it. All this is set to take a glimpse at the feature of word power and the nature of human language.

The last but not the least part of the thesis gives a summary of findings in the former chapters and proposes that the significance of human language shall be highlighted as to be the essential part of a human life making its user human in a spiritual sense, but not merely recognized as a means of human communication or a mode of human behavior because it is the mental energy for human beings like food – an essential source of energy for human flesh body. Chances are that all the efforts may lead to a new linguistic perspective both on human language through the study of biblical language and on the current linguistic theorizing and practice in the West.

Chapter II Historical review of the role and the study of language

2.1 Language as a primary means of exercising authority over the world

Looking back to the old days of our ancestors, from Confucius, Socrates, Jesus Christ, Sakyamuni, Mohammed, to leaders of modern times, Mao Zedong, Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, their words had ever exercised great power upon their contemporary people. What's more, their teachings and convictions all remain powerful and convincing among their faithful followers throughout the world. Generation after generation, people disappeared, appeared, and are disappearing in history. Although some people had been tired of achieving different goals, some people would never be discouraged from anything but catch every chance to accomplish whatever they want. People wanted to gain power over something and make a history of their own or the others or even the world. Why? Because they are intelligent at a much higher level than any living creatures on earth, humans have their minds and ambitions to conquer whatever they encounter and achieve whatever they imagine to do. But by what means can human beings make themselves connected to the others and spread the power upon them? Thinking of those figures mentioned above, you may agree that language plays a key role.

All the greatest minds in human history of civilization have had to reflect their thoughts by means of written or unwritten language. In effect, even the most trivial daily thing in our lives has to be undertaken frequently either by verbal communication or by some kind of systematic written symbols. In other words, human thoughts have to be conveyed by speaking or writing or gesturing some language, either in a so-called natural one or in an artificial one. So language, in its broadest sense, is virtually essential both to an individual and to the whole human

society. On the one hand, the past generation left their material things to the later generation. On the other hand, they passed their precious spiritual legacies through language. All thanks to language, great thought can be preserved and knowledge can be accumulated and thus human wisdom keeps on making a large number of miracles in human cultural history. And now people surely believe that that they are superior to any other creatures is in that they can speak.

The development of writing-the written form of language soon expanded the time and space for human's creative activities, resulting an improvement of human logics and abstract-consciousness. In turn such expansion facilitated a complication of human language, such as the production of natural sign language and the so-called artificial languages of mathematics, formal logic or computer. Those symbolic languages are used mainly to do things instead of simply talking about things and are credited as the very tools that promoted the advance of modern science. As a result, a range of influential writers, including Saussure, Searle, Bloomfield, Chomsky, Benjamin, Derrida, Joyce, Widdowson, Halliday, Heidegger, Labbov, Hanna, Harrison, among many others, have reassessed the role of language in human history. Is human language simply a means of communication any longer? Or in effect it is an important human behavior by which people do things? Or even more? What role of language was reflected in the Bible? Taken as truth by religious Jews and other faith-assisted people, biblical words exerted their authority power for a very long time in history. Such historic fact indicates that the key role of the Bible, as a language itself, was indeed to do things instead of merely communicating messages. This thesis, from the linguistic angle to perceive its implicit view on language's role, is tempted to find out a plausible explanation of why language is used as a primary means of exercising authority over the world.

2.2 Literature review of the study of language

2.2.1 A philosophical study of language and its limitations

There have been a good variety of views on language in academic field. First is

about the origins of language. (Yule, 1996) There are six well-known speculations: the divine source, the natural-sound source, the oral-gesture source, glossogenetics, physiological adaptation, and interaction and transactions, and each of them remains unconvincing enough. German linguist Johann Herder (Suphan, 1891, Yao Xiaoping, 1999:iii) forcefully counter-argued in his paper against the divine source and other theories, proposing that the exploration of origins of language be based on studying the facts of people's daily lives and centered on mankind themselves. By interpreting the original meaning of the biblical text, this thesis attempts to rebuke the divine source by different means. Second is about the philosophic definition of language. It is widely-accepted by most linguists and philosophers that language is a symbolic system. Such description is not satisfactory enough, though. Some linguists such as A. Schleichel (Chen Yuan, 2003) regard language as some kind of organism that can grow. Some argue that language actually is a speech act (Austin, 1962, Searle, 2001) or a mode of human behavior (Malinowski, 1935, 1978). Some argue that language is the house of being proposed by Heidegger (1959, 1982) or the last homestead of human beings (Qian Guanlian, 2005). Heidegger, a philosopher who strives for questioning the role of language for Being, believes that: "If the word did not have this bearing, the whole of things, the "world", would sink into obscurity."

Although there are so many excellent argumentations and well-known speculations concerning language, it is disturbing for people to find that a question remains a question and a speculation remains a speculation simply when they try to give a precise answer to what is language and how language originated. (Yule, 1996:I) Due to the absence of direct physical evidence and the very historical witnesses, such questions probably cannot be answered forever. If modern people want to precisely know what human language was like back in the earliest stages, they need to have direct physical evidence of the speech of our distant ancestors and for the best to call on some ancient witnesses if they are still alive. Obviously and so unfortunately linguists and scientists can never gather the above two evidences to corroborate today's linguistic theories, speculations or hypotheses for the primitive age had long gone and the only eyewitnesses died without a slim chance of coming out of the dirt

again.

Comparatively speaking, since all of what was said with those modern speculations and hypotheses in theorizing language appears unreliable enough, what was said in the ancient book of at least 4,000-year-old oral history and 3,000-year-old written history would sound more natural to original form of human language and more likely to be inspirable in linguistic research.

2.2.2 A linguistic study of language and its limitations

Yet, it does not mean nothing is left for people to do with when the basic philosophical problems of language are forever impossible to be settled with authentic evidence. People simply do not know how language originated and meanwhile find it hard to define it. Linguists then turn their eyes to some facts of language, for example, the internal and external elements of a language. Such study is now called Linguistics with many branches, such as Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics, Pragmatics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Anthropological linguistics, and Computational linguistics, (Hu Zhuanglin, 2001), Neurolinguistics or maybe more in future. Modern linguists strive for discovering all the possible facts about language and make some points by analyzing so as to find out the truth behind them. They hope to draw certain conclusions on the laws or mechanism of language from all kinds of perspectives. The Swiss scholar Saussure proposed that language's design feature is arbitrariness, which remains till today a controversy hot potato among linguists at home (Xu Guozhang, 1988, 2001, Zhu Yongsheng, 2002, Suo Zhenyu, 1995, Wang Dechun, 2001, Wang Yin 1999, Liu Runqing & Zhang Shaojie, 1997) and abroad (Sapir, 1921, Bloomfield, 1933, Hockett, 1960, Lévi-Strauss, 1977, Halliday, 1978, 1985, 1999, Benveniste, 1939, Jakobson, 1978, Haiman, 1985a). And Chomsky's theory of the faculty of language is even more controversy among modern linguists. The recent decades see a rise in studying language in use including the study on lies (Bok, 1978, DePaulo et al. 1996). In one way, the study of language like natural science develops fast and the dramatic discoveries are fruitful. Varied theories are proposed in need of proving their veracity through certain field research. In another, a

group of people are too busy in their micro-studying of language with their too many linguistic findings which are really dazzling to us and therefore in a general sense reduce their significance on examining the nature of human language. As far as the thesis goes, a study of biblical language in linguistics could be another new branch of linguistics and may raise new perspectives on how modern linguistic theories were founded.

2.2.3 Reasons and literature review for a linguistic study of the Bible

The importance of language is obvious and arouses the interest of Chinese researcher Qian Guanlian (2005) who proposed the Theory of the Last Homestead by observing the basic survival ways of man from the philosophical and pragmatic angle. He based his theory on three major statements: (1) Man lives within language; (2) Man has to live within it; (3) Man has to live within fixed speech events. His research makes sense because no one can deny the fact that at the moment of the birth, an infant is immediately immersing in the sea of a pre-existing language. This is also true for western world and other parts of the world that are under the influence of the Bible for thousands of years because (1) they lived within biblical language; (2) they had to live within it; (3) they had to live within ritual speech events of religions. Hence a study of the Bible from the linguistic angle is of necessity and of academic value in linguistics, although, the study of its value in theology and literature is more mature and popular in medieval and modern times. The academic value of the Bible crystallized in a book written by the professor William M. Schniedewind, (2004) with the title *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*. He pointed out that the formation of the Bible was a movement from orality to textuality, from a pre-literate toward a literate society. "The Bible itself will be an eyewitness to this epic shift in human consciousness, the shift from an oral world toward a textual world." When study the composition of the Bible, readers may find in the book the perfect combination of oral and written styles. It is not unreasonable to hold the view that the book probably contains some valuable information about ancient language as its language is ancient in the historical and cultural sense.

Even among Chinese researchers the Bible attracted many people's attention and aroused their interests in its values in Literature, Philosophy, or Linguistics, for example, Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren, Wen Yiduo, Zhu Weizhi, Liang Gong, Du Changzhong, Xu Guozhang, Liu Guangzhun, etc. (Liang Gong, 1999, Du Changzhong, 2001, Xu Guozhang, 2001, Liu Guangzhun, 1999) Chinese famous Linguist Xu Guozhang (2001) once pointed out in his article three valuable inspirations on linguistics in the Bible, which will be later discussed in Chapter III and IV. Liu Guangzhun (1999) conducted in one part of his paper a linguistic research on biblical words' power upon Russian in literature and culture by analyzing the wording and sentence structure of some leading writers in Russia such as Aleksandr Pushkin (Александр Сергеевич Пушкин), Lev Tolstoy (Лев Николаевич Толстой), and others.

However, the biblical linguistic study is far from mature and systematic. In most cases like those mentioned in Chapter I linguists were inspired by the Bible to form their special views on language, or possibly they were negatively inspired by. To what extent were western linguists influenced by the Bible? Only with a few background facts and without proper methods the work has not been done successfully so far. A feasible way to reveal more biblical background of western linguists is to sort out all the possible related linguistic inspirations of the Bible and classified them into several main categories. By so doing, titled with *The Power of Words in the Bible: A Study of Its Inspirations on Aspects of Language*, the thesis seeks to provide a new perspective on how much the past and current linguistic study was and is concerned with the Bible, for as far as the author knows, there are abundance of academic analysis on biblical words and sentences but seldom from the angle of its inspirations on aspects of language. Therefore, four major aspects of language are discovered from the Bible by which readers can be informed of the general viewpoints of the Bible on language.

Chapter III The Bible and the origin of human language

3.1 Language Tale One in *Genesis*

The following Story One is adapted from the book of *Genesis* 1:26 to 3:20, in *Old Testament* of the Bible. All the later discussions will be involved with these scriptures.

1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

2:19 And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

2:20 And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

2:23 And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

And after man and woman ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil ...

3:12 And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

(And therefore they were each punished by God ...)

3: 20 And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

3.2 Reasoning the biblical text on four linguistic themes

The following comprehensive key words are properly drawn out from between the lines of *Genesis* 1:26 to 2:20:

“God *said*, ... And the LORD God *formed* ...”; “the LORD God ...brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam *called* ..., that was the name thereof.”; “And Adam *gave* names to all ...”

Strictly speaking, no word of “language” appears in Story One. In this respect, the secret of language is not revealed in an explicit way by the author of the book of *Genesis* in the Bible. But interestingly, there are several clues between the lines: “God *said*...” is a speech act of God; “Whatsoever Adam *called*...” is obviously a different type of speech act of Adam, which interestingly inspired Benjamin Walter who believed that there were God’s language and human language (Yuan Wenbin 2006). More attractively, all the living creatures on earth were given names in an arbitrary way by Adam, the alleged father of human beings, but not by God. In the meantime the text reveals that the original human language was produced in the process of Adam’s giving name. Perhaps it was in this method that Adam had come to conceptualize or symbolize those creatures and consequently had dominion over them just as God wished so.

To summarize the above Tale One including the rest part of *Genesis*, three major aspects of the origin of human language are revealed between the lines.

3.2.1 Who created human language?

First is about who created human language. The most inspirable words are in the lines “... whatsoever Adam *called* ..., that was the name thereof.”; “And Adam *gave* names to all ...” The Bible says God created Adam, but does not say in the least explicit way that it was God who created human language. To go further, God did not offer a hand or interfere in the production of original human language. In this sense, to hold the speculation that human language did emanate directly from God, the divine source may be **wrong**, which some linguists and theologians once wrongly concluded

from the text is due to the limitations of the times and their personal limits of insight and knowledge. Who on earth created human original language? It was Adam – a human being himself that developed his own language during the period of his building the power station over all living creatures on earth by means of giving names. Obviously, no other living things were gifted by God with the competence of producing human language and all of them were brought under Man's control. Language is species-specific, uniquely human in one hundred percent.

3.2.2 What is original form of human language?

The first important thing done by Adam after being created was to give names to every living creature on the land and in the air including man's help meet (*Genesis 2:20*) who was named Woman right after she was made by God and brought onto man (*Genesis 2:23*). As the Bible says, God created Man and Woman on the sixth day. It is proper to assume that the original form of human language in the Bible is Adamic naming of the animals and Woman. After man and woman were driven out of the Garden of Eden, (*Genesis 3: 20*) Woman was renamed Eve by her husband as a dominion over her because God cursed so (*Genesis 3:16*, "... and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.") By these supportive clues, it can be safely grounded that giving names should be an authority.

3.2.3 What is the design feature of original human language?

The last is about the design feature of original human language. Is the link between a word and the object that it denotes arbitrary or iconic? Is there any natural resemblance or inherent association between them? Since naming of the animals and Woman is the original form of human language in *Genesis*, we can simply learn about it by overlooking what is said in the book. The sentence-"...whatsoever Adam called..., that was the name thereof." indicates that whatever sound Adam uttered in front of every creature was its name and so there is no inherent connection between the form of Adam's utterances and what they actually refer to. In other words, those original words for animals are arbitrary in form. So arbitrariness is the design feature

of naming of the animals. However, in *Genesis* 2:23 things changed “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Until then, Adam had his logic and sensibility and named the woman properly with his sound cognitive capability. The word “Woman” was not uttered casually from the mouth of Man but by his sharp insight into the inner relation with woman. (How could those ancient Jews form such strange visions upon men and women and write down such lines?) So iconicity is the design feature of naming Woman. To conclude how Adam created those names of the animals and woman, it seemed that because animals were not at the same level of species of man, Adam named those animals arbitrarily without logic thinking. On the contrary, because woman was related to him as told by the book, Adam named Woman with his smart insight and sound logic. In different situations depending on different fields, human beings can utter words arbitrarily or not.

3.2.4 The importance of naming

Just as reasoned in previous section, naming should be an authority. There are many other important linguistic clues about naming activities of Adam’s offspring in *Genesis*. Those name-giving events suggest that those speech acts were of utmost importance among many other human activities. All the obvious name-giving events in *Genesis* calculated by the author amounted to 57 times (*Genesis* 2:19-20, 2:23, 3:20, 4:1, 4:25-26, 5:3, 10:25, 11:9, 16:11, 16:15, 17:5, 17:19, 19:37-38, 21:3, 21:31, 22:14, 25:25-26, 25:30, 26:20-22, 26:33, 29:16, 19:32-35, 30:6, 30:8, 30:11, 30:13, 30:18, 30:21, 30:24, 31:47-48, 32:2, 32:28, 32:30, 33:17, 33:20, 35:7-8, 35:10, 35:15, 35:18, 38:3-5, 38:29-30, 41:51-52) or probably more than that even if the other implied events were debarred. After a closer examination, the nominees were broadened from people into a range of things, such as a place, a well, an altar, an oak for various kinds of purposes, as for praising God, remembering significant event and person, or as a witness of a covenant. Those names given whether by man, woman, or by God contained special meanings or connotations. Only three examples are listed here for the sake of those who may be interested in a further research on ancient name-giving

events. *Genesis* 10:25, “And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg; for in his days was the earth divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.” Peleg's name has the meaning of scattering to remember the geographical dispersion of the postdiluvian human population and the diversification of human language after the famous tale of Babel Tower which later is discussed in Chapter IV. *Genesis* 25:25 says “And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.” Esau meaning hairy was a name simply connected to his appearance feature. Read *Genesis* 17:4-5, “As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.” “Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.” The name of Abraham substituting Abram is a witness of the covenant between God and the father of Jews ever since. As is shown by so many examples, all the later naming activities were not arbitrary but more frequently denoted special significance.

3. 3 More debates on the original human language among linguists

3.3.1 Debating on who created human language

After a careful study on the text of the Bible, the thesis has discussed over the biblical inspirations on three major aspects of original language and more features of original naming in human primitive times. Because of the limits of a personal vision of the linguists, they interpreted the Bible very differently, for example, the divine source is a typical misinterpretation of the Bible, and not all the linguists who had faith in God believed that God created human language.

German linguist Johann Herder (Suphan, 1891, Yao Xiaoping, 1999) was a case in point. With a religious background of Christianity, he skillfully debated over the problem of who created human language by observing the facts of people's daily lives and human language's imperfectness. He firmly believed that God created Man with a soul by which humans were able to create their language and constantly refresh it on their own. The very thing that humans created language themselves would be the most

supportive and pertinent proof of God's almighty power. Compared with the Süssmilchian mysterious divine source, Herder's argument sounds more reasonable in accordance with some facts of language. In fact, as the above analysis shows, the Biblical text itself does not declare in the least explicit way that it was God who created human language. The thesis hence claims that the divine source is even lack of direct textual evidence of the Bible.

Does the Bible possibly supply an answer to why and how human could create and develop their language? Why can't the animals speak, but Adam? Perhaps, though the biblical author did not tell the readers directly, the only possible answer could be that Adam was created by God with a potential instinctive capacity of creating a language, as written in *Genesis 2:7* "And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Why not the author wrote "man became a living creature" for the better? The material of forming the flesh of Adam's body was from the dust of the ground which elements should be the same to the body-forming of animals (*Genesis 2:19* "And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; ...") The only difference may exist in the different process of creation through which man was made a living soul. Is soul-specific-ness of humans reflected in other parts of the Bible? Virtually the word "soul" or "souls" does appear 501 times in the Bible. Every time it refers to a human or humans whether in Old Testament or in New Testament, for example, *Genesis 27:19* "And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." *1 Corinthians 15:45*, "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." (15:39) "All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds." This sentence notes that men and beasts and other living creatures are all flesh (i.e. all living creations by God), even so, they fall into different kinds.

So far, it could be drawn out in certainty from the text that the authors of the Bible always held the view that human beings are superior to animals and they are in

different kind. Is that the very reason why humans can speak while birds cannot but fly and neither do beasts?

3.3.2 Debating on whether human language is endowment or accomplishment

To return to the initial question: who created human language? If it was humans themselves who created their language and if animals especially the apes can never acquire human language even if they are trained technically generation after generation, does it mean that language is bound to be unique to humans? Does it sound ridiculous that the so-called almighty God is even unable to make a man who is born with an innate endowment of producing his own language? Not at all in the logic of the believers in God such as to above-mentioned German linguist Herder. They believe that God would probably love to do that to show his almighty power if there is an almighty God. (*Romans 1:20*) Though God is “invisible”, “from the creation of the world”, “by the things that are made”, His “eternal power and Godhead” “are clearly seen”.

But there is another group of linguists who seldom revealed the Bible’s impact on their shaping of linguistic views. Can such statement “... man became a living soul” be provocative in the shaping of one popular linguistic view that mankind is born with the faculty of language which was initially proposed by Chomsky, N, the Jewish guy? Nobody knows for sure, but himself. Chomsky (1965, 1980b, 1988, 1991a, 1991b, 1995, 2000) claims that the language faculty in human brain is universal grammar, a biological endowment and blueprint for language acquisition. (Dai Manchun, 2002:255) Such claim is suspected by some linguists as anti-evolutionary, and Chomsky’s response (Fitch, Hauser, & Chomsky, 2005) “We further realized that earlier statements that had been interpreted as anti-evolutionary were in fact compatible with contemporary (and perfectly orthodox) neo-Darwinian theory.” is even more confusing. Widdowson (2000), who is also interested in the problem of endowment or accomplishment, highlighted Chomsky’s Language Acquisition Device and Universal Grammar in his book *Linguistics*. He pointed out the controversy in his theory:

“It should be noted that there is nothing especially novel about the idea that human beings are born with a cognitive learning capability which is wired genetically into the brain. What is different, and controversial, about this theory of innate universals is Chomsky’s claim that we are equipped with a specifically linguistic programme which is unique to the species, and different in kind from any other capability. ...”

(2000:13)

Chinese researcher Dai Manchun (2002) made an attempt to justify the seemingly conflicting linguistic thoughts of Chomsky’s innatism, internalism and evolutionism. She argued that they were actually scientifically uniformed in his linguistic theories. By citing the words of Jackendoff (1997:6-7), Dai summarized the contribution of his linguistic endowment theory that it shed positive impact on other fields of philosophy, psychology, biology, medicine, and education which similarly was concluded in Jin Hong-gang’s book *Studies of Language Acquisition* (1997). Dai stressed at the end of her article that the internalism was in effect the product of his innatism. The thought of language as an endowment cannot be wronged as the thought of language as a creation of God, nor can be the impact of the endowment overstated by people to neglect the other external factors. In a word, she agrees on Chomsky’s theory of the faculty of language and believes in a more complicated process of producing one language which is also, to a large extent, related to other external factors.

3.3.3 Debating on the form and design feature of original human language

Xu Guozhang (2001:10) announced that two reasonable linguistic points was made by the Bible. One is that language originated from name-giving action. The other point is that such naming was arbitrary. He thought the first point could be accepted as one explanation of the origin of language, at the same time the second one was never doubted among linguists. However, in another article of his, Xu (1988: 6-7) set the example of Adam’s and his second generation’s naming as an inspirable clue to

explain how the linguistic arbitrariness might change in the history.

i) Debate on the form of original human language

The first point of Xu reminds the author the numerous days when lots of meaningful and fantastic names would be selected and reconsidered by all family members and most relatives before the birth of a baby. A good name like a good beginning of one's life is important both for the parents and the newborn baby. And the most practical way to quickly find out the child missing in the crowd a minute ago is shout out the child's usual name as loud as one can. People do feel awkward with things unnamed when they want to talk about it, or start to deal with it, or to live on it. Only if they are nominate, people can easily and freely talk about and deal with them. Do all these phenomena agree with the first point? In a personal view, the author thinks that what is the original form of language is inexplicable for the authentic proof had forever disappeared into the past. But if the Bible did have recorded the history truly, (Its adherents believe in every word of the book.) naming as the original language form can be regarded as the inspiration of the Bible (at least in the eyes of its adherents).

ii) Debate on the original language's design feature

Ever since the arbitrariness of linguistic sign was first formally put forward by Saussure (1916), it has been inspected many times by many linguists who have supported (Sapir, 1921, Bloomfield, 1933, Hockett, 1960, Yule, 1996, Widdowson 2000, Suo Zhenyu, 1995, Wang Dechun, 2001, et al.) or complemented (Lévi-Strauss, 1977, Halliday, 1978, 1985, 1999, Xu Guozhang, 1988, Zhu Yongsheng, 2002) or challenged (Benveniste, 1939, Jakobson, 1978, Haiman, 1985a, Wang Yin 1999, Liu Runqing, & Zhang Shaojie, 1997, Fan Wenfang, & Wang Mingjie, 2002) the principle of arbitrariness.

Why do linguists hold such conflicting views upon one single principle? In my opinion it is because of the confusion in several linguistic notions. First is the confusion in the definition of arbitrariness. Different linguists interpreted Saussure's principle of arbitrariness differently. Some (Zhu Yongsheng, 2002:5) interpreted it as whether there is no natural link between sound and sense of one linguistic sign, so

they tend to agree on his theory. Some interpreted it as whether there is no natural connection of meaning and form between linguistic signs and they tend to challenge his theory believing that iconicity is the most fundamental feature of linguistic signs. Zhu Yongsheng attempted to justify his theory, claiming that the discovery of iconicity can complement rather than replace the principle of arbitrariness. Second is the confusion of the object of the study. Saussure's principle is basically built up on the basis of natural vocal language while others came up with their ideas of iconicity mainly by examining the written form of language. If people do not realize that they are arguing over different objects, there will be no end of the arguing and no hope of clarification of the problems. What if we pay strict attention only to the original vocal language's design feature in the Bible? By so doing, can we draw any further principles of the design feature of a more developed language? Here comes my attempt.

Inspired by the two different ways of naming animals and Woman (See *Genesis* 2: 19 and 2:23) in the Bible, the author believes that when what the nominee is named for is less important than the act of naming itself or what is done to nominee by naming, chances are that the names of things would be given more casually or even in an arbitrary way (But naming is still a necessity and an authority). Here is an example: I bought a doll for my two-year-old daughter as her imaginary accompany. So I had to introduce the doll to her by saying: "Hello, I'm Dudu. Do you like to be my pal?" "Dudu" has no special meaning (It could be Huahua, Fangfang, and the like; anyway I did not care.) In this case, the sound of Dudu has no natural link to what it refers to – the doll. But by naming the doll arbitrarily it would be very convenient for us to imagine it was a real child and to naturally converse with it. On the opposite occasion, when the content of naming is more important than the act of naming, (like what name should be given to a baby?) it is more likely that names would be in the meaningful way. If humans had a rational head even in the primitive times, it is hard to imagine that human language in its original form is merely arbitrary all the time but without any possible relation to what it refers to. If language is uniquely human, whether its design feature is more casual or iconical should depend on the will and the

sense of the authority. *Genesis* 35:18, “And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin.” Such a case in *Genesis* 35:18 is not uncommon in our daily life. Every couple named their children quite differently, some of which are rather casual, and some of which are rather serious in meaning. In a special period of revolutionary time, names of that generation would tend to be revolutionary.

3.4 Conclusion from the biblical perspective

It is clearly written in the Bible that God created Adam into a living soul instead of creating human language. Hence the most interesting part of the debates on the origin of language is that those who supported the divine source assuming that God created human language even lack evidence from the Bible. The second point is then revealed by many linguistic clues that Adam was authorized by God the right of giving names to all living creatures on earth and the dominion over them as well as his help meet Woman. Hence it is the most original language that can be found in *Genesis*. More importantly, the design feature of original naming in the book can be either arbitrary or iconical. Inspired by this important cue the author believes that if language is uniquely human, whether its design feature is arbitrary or non-arbitrary should depend on the will and the sense of the authority. When the name is less important than the naming act, people tend to give names to things arbitrarily, or to say more casually. So if the name is more important than the naming act, they give names in a more meaningful way.

Chapter IV The Bible and the differentiation of language

4.1 Language Tale Two in *Genesis* - the Tower of Babel

This story is well-known in the world as the story of the Tower of Babel, mainly from the book of *Genesis* 11:1 to 11:9:

11:1 And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.

... ..

11:3 And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

... ..

11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

11:8 So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

11:9 Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

4.2 Reasoning the biblical text on language variation

According to the previous description of *Genesis* 11:1, Noah's family survived and the generations of his sons were born after the flood. "And the whole earth was of one language, of one speech." In Tale One, it was not told explicitly by the author

whether the original Adam's words developed and thence became conventional among his offspring. However for the first time, the word "language" appears in *Genesis* 11:1, with implication of conventionality of language making people as one. Language was a link between people to pull together in their activities and thus to achieve one goal, as was written in *Genesis* 11:3. Furthermore, only when the language was confounded, the understanding of one another's speech was blocked and thence the link that combined people as one was broken off. But the author of *Genesis* did not tell how God confounded the language of the sons of Noah, only with a mention of the result of scattering them abroad and stopping them from building the city – Babel.

Some interesting points were also embedded between the lines 11:6-7 "the LORD said, Behold, the people is **one**, and they have all **one language**"; "... and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have **imagined to do.**"; "Go to ...there **confound** ...that they may not understand one another's speech."

It was the first time that human imagination power was mentioned in the Bible, which would made the sons of Noah accomplish whatever they wished with the help of one single language. To restrain them from what they have imagined to do, God had to confound their language instead of failing their imagination. Why did not God get the job done once and for ever by failing their imagination? Was it because man had become a living soul which makes him independent on God? No explanation was given in an explicit way by the author of the book. In reality, as we know it, whatever we human beings once imagined to do was finally accomplished one day by efforts from generation to generation, for example, the ancient people's dreams of flying in the sky, landing on the Moon, and so on. The creating history of humankind is motivated at least partly by human imagination. What may decrease the speed of turning an imagination into reality? Is a differentiation of one language an effective method? Will the state of a disorder of language be attributed to it?

All legends written in *Genesis* had been told by mouth through one generation to the later. It is admiring and also bold for forefathers of Jews to assume that all languages of each people were of the same root. They anticipated a uniformed

language of all peoples might exert huge power to help humans fulfill all dreams that they had imagined. So their children were informed that language once made people as one, and played a key role or at least was quite helpful in the unification of people's thought and action. After God confounded their language, says *Genesis 10:5*, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue, after their families, in their nations.", which means thereafter the sons of Noah and their generations scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth and became different people in different nations having different languages. Those points did make sense if we recall those days when Chinese people admired President Mao so sincerely that every word of his was taken seriously as absolute truth which unified the whole nation into building a great socialist society. It is also believed among people that a nation would disappear or at least be assimilated by other nation if its people forget their own language.

Xu Guozhang (2001) shared a similar opinion on this part. He interpreted the Story of Babel as telling readers two points: (i) All languages in the world have one single root. It was interfered by God that language was differentiated. (ii) Language combines the community into one; a community may break off if language differs. He argued that the first point was lack of physical evidence and the second is acceptable.

4.3 A summary of the Tale Two

The reason why God confounded the language of humans is clearly told in the Babel Tower story except how God did it. It is because God wanted to see people were restrained from what they had imagined to do. By confounding the language, people divided into different peoples whose languages were strange to one another as in the sentence people scattered abroad "after their families, after their tongues, in their countries, and in their nations". In effect, Tale Two reveals a reasonable point of view that one uniformed language would be of great help to unite all people into effective efforts of all kinds of creations. At the same time, the imagination power possessed by mankind is directly pointed out for the first time in the Bible.

Chapter V The Bible and the falsity of language – lies

5.1 Introduction

Searle (2001:16) once expressed his view on the necessity of the study of speech acts in his book: “A great deal can be said in the study of language without studying speech acts, but any such purely formal theory is necessarily incomplete.”

In the Bible, there are numerous cases of speech acts, such as:

Genesis 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Psalms 33:9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

By speaking, the speaker performs something. In other words, to speak is to do things. Though it has already been reflected in the Bible, this view is generally regarded as the greatest contribution of Austin and Searle to modern linguistics. Their speech act theory now forms the backbone of pragmatics. As Pragmatics made great progress in the study of speech acts, more and more people perceive performing a speech act as an intentional behavior. But actually such a discovery of the function of speaking is not novel at all in the Bible where nearly all the lies serve a special intention of doing things. Austin (1962) suggests that there are three senses of an act: locutionary act, illocutionary act and perlocutionary act. The following section will mainly display how the lying acts in the Bible cover the three types of acts, along with a necessary review of other aspects of lies in the book which may enrich the pragmatic study of lies.

Before the discussion, the definition of lies should be clarified. The first entry of lie (n.) in *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary (New Revised Edition)* (1996:827) reads: A false statement made with deliberate intent to deceive; an intentional untruth; a falsehood. Similar definition of lie is also accepted among linguists that lies are statements that the speaker believes to be false and that are intending to mislead the addressee. (Bok, 1978) Deception, another broader term applied in linguistics, has almost the same connotation as lies in the Bible. To our

knowledge, no perfect theory is proposed to systematically explain such social phenomenon. Why people tell lies? Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle, Leech's (1983) Politeness Theory, Brown and Levinson's (1978) 'Face' Theory explained part of the reasons but failed in most cases of deceptions. (He Ziran, & Zhang Shuling, 2006) Does the Bible reveal anything about the intentions of lies? Do the illocutionary acts of lies vary?

5.2 Reasoning biblical comments and events about lies

5.2.1 Presentation of lies

By 2.2 searching tool for the study of the Bible of the key word of Chinese "huǎng", 129 verses containing the meaning of lie are found in the book. Most of them turn out to be comments on lies, indicating the biblical authors' views on some aspects of lying, the words and phrases of which are listed below:

Noun phrases: lies, vain/ lying words, lying/ false/ flattering lips or mouth, lying and corrupt words, a deceitful/ lying tongue, a lying divination, liars, vain person, forgers of lies, a right hand of falsehood, a seed of falsehood, a teacher of lies, no guile in one's mouth, a double heart.

Verb phrases: to lie, to swear falsely, to mock, to tell somebody lies, to speak vanity, to bend one's tongue for lies, to divine lies, to commit falsehood, to eat the fruit of lies, to love and make a lie.

To sum up the above phrases, a feature of lying is easily observed among them: lying is closely related to vanity, falsehood, pride, iniquity and a deceitful heart going against the truth. There are two categories of lies: one is evil and the other is immoral. Whatever it is, it originated from the devil.

5.2.2 The origin of lies

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in

him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

(John 8:44)

This verse is the words of Jesus in *John, New Testament* condemning the scribes and Pharisees' seeking to kill him and their refusal to the truth. By questioning Jesus, these people wanted to find faults in his words so that they could accused him of certain guilt. Jesus pointed out that lies originated from the devil - Satan who was self-centered. "He" - "a murderer from the beginning" is "the father" of a lie; "he" speaks "of his own" "lust". So a liar will do the lusts of the devil.

It should be highlighted that the original lie, which committed a murder according to the words of Jesus, was an ill-intent behavior made by Satan (Genesis 3). By lying, the devil successfully did something to Adam and Eve and their offspring, and this will be analyzed in more details in the following sections.

5.2.3 The Garden of Eden: the original event of lying

According to the Bible, Adam and Eve were blessed by God living peacefully in the Garden of Eden until the first event of lying committed by the devil happened. The serpent beguiled the woman into eating "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" along with the man. By distorting the true meaning of what God commanded Adam and Eve, the serpent successfully played a trick on human beings through which they also learned the good and the evil and started to lie as well. And of course three of them were cursed and punished by God for what they had done. But what on earth did the serpent's lying do to the victims?

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

(Genesis 3:6)

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

(Genesis 3:12-13)

The above statements (Genesis 3:12-13) uttered by Adam and Eve may be the most typical justification ever done in the book. After they were cheated by the devil into eating the fruit of the tree, God asked each of them for an explanation of their disobedience, but each responded with a highlight of the other's deed to himself/herself in the first place. Adam explained to God this way, "The woman whom thou gavest ..., she gave me of ..., and I did eat." The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ..." However in previous verses, the author of *Genesis* tended to reveal something of their disobedience "when the woman saw ...tree ...good for food, ...pleasant to eyes, ... desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, ..." More interestingly before the corruption when God made a woman out of him, Adam regarded her as a dear part of his flesh, saying "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." After the thing happened, his love for her immediately diminished. And he shifted to call the dear part of his flesh "the woman whom thou gavest to be with me". Did something inside their hearts change both of them after the entry of the knowledge of good and evil? By eating the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, both of them were infected with the evil, thus ashamed of "being naked." Just as *Proverbs* 14:25 says "A true witness delivereth souls: but a deceitful witness speaketh lies." As a result, God had to punish each of them for what they had done. And that was the very beginning of corruption of human beings according to the spirit of the Bible. And there is no end of that only because people tend to always put the blame on the others as is said in *Proverbs* 16:2 "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.", in *Proverbs* 20:6 "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" and in *Proverbs* 21:2 "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts." In this

respect, a naïve and pure heart of human beings was killed away because of the knowledge of good and evil. That is the worst thing ever done to humans by the devil for he ruined human life fundamentally by raising their disbelief in God and distrust in the others.

Again, here is the analysis on the words of the devils:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

(3:4-5)

The locutionary act of the devil was telling the woman what he knew about the words of God. Then he disassembled the original meanings of God, producing a disbelief in the God's words of "Ye shall die" by pointing out "God doth know that ...". Such an act performed is known as an illocutionary act of the devil. By telling the woman something, he changed the opinion of the woman on the fruit of tree, and so induced her to eat it. Finally the devil achieved his intention of killing away of a naïve and pure heart of human beings. Such an act is called the perlocutionary act in the theory of Austin and Searle. Though all the lies are nicely wrapped up in the appearance of the truth, they are not helpful for the hearer to know the essence of the whole fact. Generally speaking, lying is misleading in knowing the fact and thus basically it meets the speaker's desire of doing something.

Another important example of lying act is revealed in the Bible in section 5.2.4.

5.2.4 Abraham in Egypt and Gerar: the intention of a lie

Abraham, the ancestor of the Jews as recorded, also committed immoral lies twice. Because of the beauty of Sarai his wife Abram was so afraid of being killed by Egyptian Pharaoh and Abimelech king of Gerar that he called Sarai his sister publicly causing two innocent Kings take her away to be their wife. The intention of his lies is told already in *Genesis* 12:11-12.

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

Such lying finally bore sinful fruits of both the Kings. One fruit is in *Genesis* 20:2 “And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah.” The effect of Abraham’s lie is already written in the book: by addressing Sarai his sister in public, he misled both the Kings and put them in a great sin. And obviously the blame should be put on Abraham for he intended to save his own life.

Why did Abraham call his wife sister? It was explained by himself when the king blamed Abraham for setting his people in a great sin in *Genesis* 20:12 “And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.” To put it simpler, by such a speech act of calling wife his sister (locutionary act), the intention of hiding the fact of his wife (illocutionary act) was achieved, which finally, as he wished, saved his own life from the possibility of being killed by both the Kings and at the same time resulted in their immoral act of taking Sarai from him to be their own wife (perlocutionary act). In this way, how people perform something by saying something is well narrated in the biblical story. What else, Abraham knew the whole thing, but intentionally untold the crucial part of the fact that Sarah was his wife for fear of the possibility of being killed, just as told in the book. Abraham lied not to intend to do harm to others but to protect himself from being hurt. Can it be called a lie in the linguistic sense? If can, then the definition of such lies is broadened this way: statements which turns out to be misleading and in the making of which the speaker intentionally keep the crucial part of the fact in the dark only for the benefit of his/her own but not necessarily to intend to do harm to others.

5.3 Review on aspects of lies in the Bible

5.3.1 The prevalence of lies and their self-serving intentions

There are three verses indicating the prevailing of lies among people in the Bible:

Psalms 12:2 “They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.”

Psalms 116:11 “I said in my haste, All men are liars.”

Isaiah 59:4 “None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity.”

Theorists, such as DePaulo et al. (1996), once predicted that lying is a part of daily life and later proved its popularity through their research. Not surprisingly, Caspi and Gorsky (2006) also noticed the prevalence and motivation of online deception, claiming that 84% of their sample experienced enjoyment from the lying acts online. (Cited from Monica T. Whitty, & Siobhan E. Carville. 2007) Certainly this is not a novel finding since it is already presented in the Bible 3,000 years ago. In *Psalms 12:2* it is noted that people do speak with a double heart, and as already cited in the above section 5.2.1, *John 8:44* “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own”, people lie to serve their own interests. Coincidentally, DePaulo et al. (1996) also found that the people told lies either self-servingly or allegedly to protect the hearer – although most lies were self-serving ones.

5.3.2 A summary of the Bible’s presentation on lies

The author of the Bible recorded a large number of lying comments and events, referring that all the lies were originated from the devil who from the beginning committed a murder by lying to human beings. The Bible itself provides numerous examples of speech acts whose intentions are often told in the book along with their consequential impacts on the hearer. To be more exact, God created the whole world

as he spoke, and after that the devil ruined the life of human beings by telling a lie. And even men and women can achieve their own intentions by a proper use of words in their speech. Behind every speech act in the Bible, there must be an intention of it. The key to understand the speech acts in the Bible is to examine the intention of each of them. In the Garden of Eden, by listening to the words of the devil in the Garden of Eden, human beings lost faith in God and correspondingly came to be egocentric, having all kinds of fears of risking one's benefit, losing one's face or else. The more fear grows in a soul, the more likely a person is to lie, from a trivial one to an immoral one even to an evil one. So inspired by the Bible, the author related such lying behavior to a fearful soul. All lying behaviors including the so-called white lies are results of internal fears of exposing a truth and risking one's benefit. Such an explanation may complement the theory on lies of Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle and others which have been mentioned above.

Chapter VI The Bible and the power of words

6.1 Introduction

Speaking of the power of words, people will quickly recall the old days when people awed about their magic power as well as many other objects'. Almost all the superstitions practiced in old ages have been mentioned in the Bible in which such practices were prohibited by the biblical authors and regarded as "*an abomination unto*" the Divine God and those who practiced any kind of such superstitions shall be severely punished or even driven out of the land. The belief of superstitions is now called fetishism by which Karl Marx (1975) was inspired to discover the use value and value of commodity and develop his great theory on Capital. (See Chapter I about 'fetishism of commodity', *On Capital*) As a Jew himself, Karl Marx had learnt about the God's commandments and his hatred to the practice of superstitions. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Karl Marx shall be impressed by it to believe that an object is an object without any magic power because it is nothing but the work of men's own hands as the Bible says:

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

(*Psalms 115:4-8*)

Everyone who makes or trusts in those man-made objects will be as foolish or disabled as those idols are. In the later sections, the readers will be well-informed with all the words concerning fetishism in the Bible in order that they shall come to know the difference of their religious lives observed between the Jews and the people in

other nations in the ancient time. How did language fetishism come into being? Why did our ancients believe in the magic power of words? What is said about the power of words of God in the Bible? What is the real power of words of human beings?

6.2 Reasoning fetishism and the uniqueness of the biblical faith

6.2.1 The prevalence of fetishism recorded in the Bible

Fetishism, (Chen Yuan, 1980, 2003) a belief in an object regarded with awe as being the embodiment or habitation of a potent spirit or as having magical potency, has long existed in human history. Such superstitions that were widespread among ancient people in most nations were recorded down in the Bible and also were repeatedly abolished among the Jewish people to meet the commandments of the LORD God. According to the Bible, the objects that were believed to have magic powers by the ancient people could be everything, such as “images of stone, wood, iron, brass, silver, gold”, “any likeness of any thing” that is in sky, on land or in water. There were people whose work was to make such idols and who made a living by performing such superstitions for example, “the idolatrous priests”, “the workers with familiar spirits, the wizards”, “the charmers” and so on. There were superstitious ceremonies and activities, such as to “burn incense in the high places”, or “unto Baal”, “to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven”, to “offer sweet savour to all their idols”, let any of their children “pass through the fire to Molech”, to burn “their sons and their daughters” “in the fire to their gods”, to “cut” themselves, or “make any baldness between” their “eyes for the dead”.

For no reason, in every age, all the days of their lives, our ancestors clung to these customs of worshiping “the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made” and observing all kinds of ceremonies to idols “round about their altars, upon every high hill, in all the tops of the mountains, and under every green tree, and under every thick oak”, including the Jewish people who were commanded many times by God for not to follow the ordinances of other nations. God of the Jews delivered his men to tell his people what he hates from time to time:

Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: ...

(Leviticus 26:1)

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

(Exodus 20:4)

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

(Deuteronomy 18:10-13)

To sum up, the authors recorded many facts about the ancient people's superstitious lives in their books, and highlighted the Jews' wise objection to the practice of fetishism. But unfortunately on dozens of occasions most of the Jews were drawn away and bowed down to idols as the other people did in neighborhoods. Because of their disobedience to the orders of God, it is believed that the Jews finally were driven out of the promised land and started to wander about all over the earth as refugees. God had warned the disobeying people many times like in *Jeremiah 29:18*.

And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

6.2.2 A unique faith of the Jews in God

Why did the Jews turn a deaf ear to the words of Moses - their greatest prophet in history (*Exodus* 20:4) and fail to perform the ten covenants commanded by God? Perhaps there are three reasons.

First of all, the Jewish God is unique. Other Gods of other nations - Egypt, Canaan, Sodom, Babylon, Athens, and many other places all had a name and an image for people to recognize each of them and to bow down upon them, such as Molech, Baal, Remphan, Jupiter, Mercurius, Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, (*1 Kings* 11:33) etc. But strangely enough, the Jews did not know the God by his name nor ever see his real image. It is forbidden to make any likeness of any thing in the universe an image of God.

Genesis 17:1 “the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, **I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.**”

Exodus 3:6 “Moreover he said, **I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.**”

And Moses asked God how he shall call him if the people ask what God's name is. *Exodus* 3:14 “And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM:** and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM** hath sent me unto you.”

From the above text, nobody could ever know the name of Jewish God since it was never revealed by God himself or put down by the authors of the Bible. Therefore several names of God, such as God, Jehovah, Lord, Creator, the Blessed, the Strength were produced when the Jews had to refer to their God. (Xu Xin, & Ling Jiyao, 1993:30)

Neither did the Jews ever see an exact image of God. *Deuteronomy* 4:12 “And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: **ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.**” God never showed up his face

in front of his people according to the Bible *Exodus 33:20* "And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live." Instead God let Moses see the glory of his back:

And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

(*Exodus 33: 22-23*)

Second, the way to worship God is unique. God did not want his people to learn about his name or to carve a figure of him to worship, but to remember what he had done for his people and to keep the commandments of God no more no less. In this way, all that they could worship was in the words of Jesus: *John 4:23-24* "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall **worship the Father in spirit and in truth**: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." In the same way, Jesus left nothing of himself but the words and his orders for his followers. He was killed by the Jewish leaders because he called himself the son of God and he rose with his body from the death leaving a sepulcher empty. (Even the tomb is not his but a counselor-Joseph's)

The third and also difficult point is that how people can worship God in spirit and in truth if nobody knows what the truth is and what a spirit of God is. Without any knowledge of these, people are likely to turn their ears to others, to trust in any thing that they see, hear, touch, make, possess and live on - a burning fire, a roll of thunder, a temple they built, the fortune they earned, the fame they gained, the high position they climbed to, the food they live on, like Adam and Eve when their eyes were opened, they believed the sewed fig leaf around their waist could keep their body in darkness from the shame of being naked. Whether a person is a master of some thing (such as money) or a slave to it (money) depends on the faith in God Father and in his truth because Jesus says (*Luke 16:13*) "No servant can serve two masters: for either he

will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”(The person who serves God will not be a servant of mammon – money) The followers are taught to regard everything upon the world as null but to believe in Jesus so that one day they could rise again out of the ground like Jesus and enter into his glory to be sons of God. *Genesis 1:26* “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the ...” The whole text of the Bible is well-weaved into one wonderful story of how men were created and saved by the words of God.

6.3 Reasoning language fetishism and its inspirations

6.3.1 Analysis on language fetishism in the Bible

Since people tend to trust in everything they know, naturally people tend to believe in human language as instruments for the control of objects. Superstitions concerning words, or the belief in verbal magic, remain even in today, such as forbidden words of every sort. The power of another special world of words in psychological analysis has appeared overwhelming in the modern world. Language fetishism did have a very long history and the power of words is all-pervasive no less than any other spheres. (Ogden, & Richards, 1923:24-47) “Most educated people are quite unconscious of the extent to which these relics survive at their door, still less do they realize how their own behavior is moulded by the unseen hand of the past.” Chinese linguistic researcher Chen Yuan was so impressed by people’s language fetishism during the ten years of Cultural Revolution that he wrote down his own experience of that period in the book *Language and Social Life*. (Chen Yuan, 1980) It is also well-known how the Jews awed about the names of God every time they had to clean themselves in a bathe before the names were written down in the Hebrew Bible. In the eyes of traditional Jews, to claim oneself the son of God was also too bold and offensive a behavior to God which was especially hated by the ancient Jewish chief priests and scribes and such blasphemy deserved a death penalty. Similarly, (Ogden, & Richards, 1923:28) “in parts of ancient Greece the holy names of the gods to ensure

against profanation were engraved on lead tablets and sunk in the sea.”

But according to the teachings of Jesus, the Christians are removed from such language fetishism. They know that God dislikes his people (*Mark 7:6-8*) “... honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. How be it in vain do they worship me, ... laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.” Abandoning the useless tradition such as the washing, they **worship the Father in spirit and in truth** instead, for they who believe in Jesus and do as he told are promised to be sons of God - the name is still regarded as forbidden word among many Jews who reject the Christianity. (*2 Corinthians 3:6*) “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; **not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.**” The above sentence expounds that the external forms of words are useless for saving a soul, but the internal meaning contained – the real essence of words, can give people life and set them free from any sin. Knowing what God truly wants, the Christians need not to clean themselves by water before they speak or write about God but to love others as God loves his people (*1 John 3:18*) “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.”

In that sense, words do not count before any deed is done. Or to put it the other way, if people do not mean to be honest about what they say, any words out of their mouth will lose its true meaning. It shall be properly handled that no superstitions on the magic power of human language are released from the Bible. On the contrary, the authors of the Bible often comment that most of the time, people speak vain words when they have no sincere heart.

6.3.2 Analysis on its inspirations on the power of words

Obviously the Bible itself is against a superstition on language – the so-called language fetishism, but on the other hand stresses what things words of a person can do, that is the spiritual power of words.

Many sentences in the Bible subject to how spiritual the words of God and his

prophets can be to human beings such as (*Matthew 4:4*) "..., Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (*John 6:63*) "..., the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (*Deuteronomy 32:2*) "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:"

Similarly, human words in time possess a positive power in the Bible while some words have negative power to a soul. Metaphoric speaking, words can comfort and deliver a soul, or kill it, having a constructive, instructive, or destructive power like the forces of nature, wind, rain, snow upon the earth. Wild windstorm and rainstorm destroy the houses and crops and forests while milder ones carry the seeds of plants to a new land and bring water to them to make the earth full of new lives. The following sentences listed below are picked out from the Bible as the few examples of spiritual power of words.

Job 4:4 "Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees."

Proverbs 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." (15:4) "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit." (13:3) "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction."

Job 19:2 "How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?"

Proverbs 16:28 "A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends." (18:8) "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." (26:20) "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."

So, it is proposed in the Bible that (*Ephesians 4:29*) "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers".

6.4 Debating on the nature of language among linguists and its inspirations

If language has no magic power, then what is language used for? It is well-accepted among linguists that language is a symbolic system and it mainly functions as a means of communication for hundreds of years. However, in recent decades, some linguists argued that language is a speech act (Austin, 1962, Searle, 2001) or a mode of human behavior (Malinowski, 1935, 1978). By observing complex speech-situations among savages in a lagoon village of the Trobriands, Professor of Anthropology Bronislaw Malinowski, discovered that “language in its primitive function and original form has an essentially pragmatic character”; that “it is a mode of action” in concerted human activity. (Malinowski, 1935, 1978) Based on his field work, he established his view of the nature of language which in its original form “has to be learned not through reflection but through action” and therefore reached a conclusion that “language is used by people engaged in practical work” in which “it is an indispensable element of concerted human action” – a mode of behaviour, rather than “a mere residuum of reflective thought” or “an instrument of reflection.” If Malinowski was correct at this point, the basic function of language is no more a means of communication than an effective action upon all kinds of human activities. If he was the first person who had successfully explained the practical effect of language upon people’s fundamental pursuits in the real material world, the Bible is probably a book in the other way that shows how language do things to people and the world, and what things language can do.

However, limited to the space of the thesis, it is impossible to analyze all the speech acts in the Bible to explain how language exercise its multiple powers and do things. Lying mentioned in the former chapter is an important speech act of human beings regarded by all linguists of Pragmatics. All the lies are not simply statements for communication but serve the speakers’ special intention of doing something which finally is achieved by the act of lying to the listeners. What’s more, the biblical author

also explained the main function of biblical language is not a book of readings but a book to teach its people to be able to do good works: 2 *Timothy* 3:16-17 “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

Chapter VII Conclusion

This thesis has (i) presented three major reasons for a linguistic study of the Bible and provided some backgrounds of the research about the Bible and its contribution to the study of language, (ii) outlined some historical studies on language which are related to the following linguistic research on the Bible, (iii) examined some important clues in the Bible in the four chapters about four linguistic topics which, the author hopes, may be indicative and inspiring to today's language study. All the efforts made in the thesis, as the author has mentioned in Chapter I Introduction, obviously aim at a correct comprehension of what are revealed in the Bible about some aspects of language and a better understanding to the construction of the theories of Western linguistics. By sorting out all the linguistic inspirations of the Bible, the thesis touches many linguistic themes such as who created human language, what is the original form and design feature of human language, whether language is endowment or accomplishment, how language differentiated and the importance of a uniformed language, why people tell lies, what is the harm of lying, whether language has magic power which was wrongly perceived by some people who awed about it, what is the real power of words - verbal or written. It is argued that the power does not exist in the letters, the form of the words, but in the meaning and application of the words. Any superstition on a magic power of words, the so-called language fetishism, is ridiculous and sometimes pollutes the purity of language. Instead language in use should deserve a more thorough examination by all the linguists.

At the end of a long discussion involving the detailed examination of many language problems about the Bible, the thesis assumes that the failure to apply proper approaches to fully scope the study of language is in that linguists regard human language mainly as a symbolic system that may develop as time goes by. Because the content of language is concerned with the spiritual activities of human beings, the

nature of language is difficult to perceive especially when it is regarded simply as a system of symbols like some kind of physical matters. The same thing would happen when scientists attempt to study the nature of a man. Nobody can easily perceive a person's nature by carefully examine all kinds of systems and their functions in his/her physical body such as the structure of the skeleton, the nerve system, the digestive system, the tissue of a cell or an organ and so on. Instead, scientists have to observe the nature in a spiritual way, such as their basic psychological needs, the moral consciousness, and so on. Fortunately modern linguists have made progress in observing the nature of language from Saussure's structuralism to modern pragmatism. But still it is a long way to go. It is because language actually is the essential spiritual part of a human life making its user human but not brutal like beasts, so it should not just be a means of communication or a mode of human behavior but a necessary spiritual tool to realize all human dreams of doing things. Of course the whole physical body is a necessary material tool of doing things. Like the spider is born to weave net to seek food all its life, human beings are born to speak and write and think to seek truth and explore in the world all the days of life, and finally they build up a kingdom of their own – "To be or not to be?". Otherwise their existence will become worthless indeed.

The story of Helen Keller (John, 1903) may inspire some of the linguists in this respect. If not taught to know the spirit of those writing motions, Helen Keller, the deaf-blind mute, who had been supposed to be impossible to be taught anyhow, would never had the chance to feel the wonderful civilized world with her fingers. How crude had her life been in the days of darkness and soundlessness! Fortunately she had a soul in her body, but what is soul of a person? Obviously it differs from the language. It seems that the soul has a mental power – imagination according to the tale of Babel Tower in *Genesis*, and has passions and desires according to the description of Helen Keller:

Meanwhile the desire to express myself grew. The few signs I used became less and less adequate, and my failures to make myself understood were invariably

followed by outbursts of passion. ... I made frantic efforts to free myself. I struggled ... I generally broke down in tears and physical exhaustion.

It was the third of March, 1887, three months before she was seven years old. All of sudden it is the spirit of words set her free and opened a door to a different life with “friendship, companion, and love”. Thanks to the language, she was not disabled in spirit any more, though she remained physically disabled.

... As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten – a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that ‘w-a-t-e-r’ meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

At the moment she realized that there is a name for everything, she discovered the secret of human language and was freed by it. By learning to use a language – the necessary spiritual tool of doing things, (Actually she had learned five languages.) Helen Keller finally led a successful life of a writer, which is a miracle made by language but not by the flesh body. This does not mean that the flesh part is unimportant at all. On the contrary, the body acts as a necessary material tool of doing things. To be specific, the most important organ of understanding and producing language is brain. The rest parts: ears, eyes, mouth, throat, four limbs are all the important “tools” that will help human beings to sense at least some form or type of language and use it. A person whose body is cut off with every passage to even one type of language is deprived of any hope of living a human life like a bird without wings is unfortunately deprived of a bird’s life. (Fortunately, Helen Keller had a good brain to learn a language with her ten fingers.) At the end of the thesis, it is believed

by the author that the nature of human language exists not only in what things language can do, but also in why language can do such things. To forbid people expressing their internal longings for truth, love, freedom, dignity, or even the most basic demands for a better life is against the nature of language and should be condemned as inhumane.

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