

This paper is the result of the informal collaboration of a working group of the Translation Development Group of the Forum of Bible Agencies International. It does not necessarily reflect the official policies of FOBAI or any of the member agencies.

Translation Consultancy: Ways Forward

Preface

From the inception of the Forum of Bible Agencies International, the Translation Development Group (as it's now called) considered the issues of Translation Consultants. This is evident from the document entitled "Statement on qualifications for translation consultants" originally drafted in 1994, accepted in 1997, and most recently updated in April 2006. In April 2010 a discussion took place at the TDG meeting in Ft. Worth on a variety of linked subjects that was summarized as "Translation Consultancy." It was decided to make this a subject of extended discussion at the next meeting in Boston in October 2010. Several hours were dedicated to this subject in Boston. At the end of that time, a working group was formed to summarize the discussion and to extend themes that appeared to them as central to the discussion. The result is this working paper. In many ways this continues the conversation begun almost twenty years ago and no doubt will continue in some form into the future. The themes elaborated here mark where the TDG is at in the dialog on this central issue of translation consultancy.

Dr. James Maxey, Chair of TDG.

Introduction

During the last roughly sixty years the world saw a surge in Bible translation. Much of the translation work was carried out by cross-cultural translators as Western mission expansion was reaching its climax. Translation work by first-language speakers¹ also increased significantly during this period. As Bryan Harmelink explains in this document, soon after Eugene Nida arrived at the offices of the American Bible Society in New York in the early 1960's, manuscripts of new translations were arriving there for review and approval. This necessitated the development of a team of consultants who could go and evaluate the quality of the new translations before they could be published.

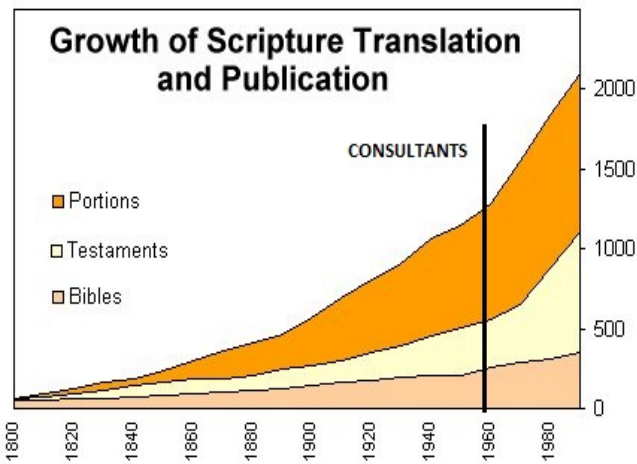


Photo by Stephen Payne

Looking back on the 2,100 year history of Bible translation, we see that the role of the outsider consultant/exegete was part of this late twentieth-century western mission expansion, and as such

¹ Some people use the term "mother-tongue translator" or "native speaker translator", depending on cultural sensitive to certain terms.

is a fairly recent development. The graph on the next page shows when the translation consultant entered the scene.²



Now in the 21st Century, the responsibility of translation is increasingly once again the task of first-language speakers and the local church, if one exists. Moreover, the surge in new translation projects led by Global South Christians continues to accelerate as more people realize the practical theological necessity of Bible translation in discipleship and church planting. Recently, the importance of this was affirmed by delegates to the Third Lausanne Congress on Global Evangelization in Cape Town, South Africa.

While the growth in translation work continues to surge, the number of translation consultants is either static or in decline. This has resulted in a global bottleneck in translation checking. This problem alone requires us to re-evaluate the efficiency of current consultant checking methods. Even so, addressing the lack of regular consultant help is only part of the reckoning. These days, opinions expressed by the Global South Church concerning the role of Bible translation in their situations challenge some long standing Western assumptions about the role and function of a translation consultant. Much was accomplished during the last sixty years in translation with the dedicated and typically sacrificial help of translation consultants. Even so, we are at a juncture in Bible translation history when it is essential to re-evaluate those assumptions, such as how individual research and translation, as a culturally conditioned factor, influence the work—if indeed translation is seen more as a communal effort in the 21st Century.

First, Dr. [Bryan Harmelink](#) discusses the values and functions of a translation consultant. The values of consulting are all those things we hold dearly like developing a good understanding of the biblical text, exegetical quality, and naturalness, to name a few. The functions of consulting are the activities that we believe will enable translation teams to produce good translations. Bryan discusses how exegetical preparation can be effectively accomplished through the Communal Discovery Study Method. The intention is not to replace exegesis with merely reading the text, but rather, to develop a holistic understanding of the text, without the level of abstraction common in traditional exegetical study that in some way embody those values. If, for example, insights about discourse structure are brought in as part of the communal discovery process, this should help avoid the potential problem of analytical abstraction.

Following that, Dr. [Larry Jones](#) discusses the various roles that a translation consultant plays during a translation checking session. He suggests that having one person cover all of those rolls does not

² Source United Bible Societies.

necessarily enable them to provide a realistic guarantee of exegetical quality, given the typical limited scope of their involvement in the project. He believes splitting the various tasks that a translation consultant does among a wider group of people trained to carry out certain tasks under the guidance of a translation consultant could enhance translation accuracy and more accurately provide a guarantee of translation quality. This views the role of a consultant like that of a medical doctor who assigns tasks to his/her physician's assistants (PAs) who are capable of carrying out certain tasks under the aegis of the Doctor.

Next, as an effort to alleviate the bottleneck in translation consulting, to speed up the process of checking, and to impart valuable training to the translators as part of the process, Dr. [Véroni Krüger and Dr. Barry Funnell](#) give a detailed description of their experiences in doing simultaneous translation checking, in this case with eight languages in a language cluster project in Tanzania. They provide real world anecdotal data on the successes and challenges of this method of scripture checking over the last five years. This includes a description of step-by-step procedures applied in this strategy. The goal is not just to speed up translation, but to leverage the skills and experience of all of the translators in one setting at the same time. This results in the translators training and teaching one another through the checking process by means of conversations, explanations and illustrations from the translators, themselves. This practice should also enable Bible Societies and Bible Agencies to reach their goal of seeing all languages with translations or translation projects started within this generation.

Finally, Dr. [Gilles Gravelle](#) discusses the notion of “crowd sourcing” in Bible translation. The idea behind crowd sourcing is that by including more people from the community in early stages of translation drafting and even the exegetical checking process, this aggregates a greater amount of knowledge, skills, and wisdom than could be achieved by a small team of mostly experts, such as one to three translators working with a consultant. He asserts that while a traditional consultation, where one consultant works with one translator or a team of translators, might produce an exegetically tight translation sooner, it may not produce a translation that is culturally engaging and more naturally communicative, hence need for a larger “crowd” from the community to participate in all stages of the translation process. Therefore, exegesis is seen more as a “consultant-guided” community-based iterative process rather than a one-time incremental step with a traditional consultant check.

A final [Synopsis](#) concludes this document.

Developing Team Consultancy Skills

Dr. Bryan Harmelink³

“We need more translation consultants” is one of the most frequent pleas that I hear where I travel. I have been involved in consultant training workshops, the development of consultant training materials, and I’ve attended consultations focused on meeting this critical need. No translation agency is immune to this problem. Even though encouraging advances have been made in the number of translation consultants receiving training in certain regions of the world, the numbers are far behind the consulting needs.

In recent years, I’ve had the privilege of consulting with the Wapishana translation team in Guyana. Over the years that I’ve worked with the team, they have gained experience, developed skills, and grown toward more independent work as translators and reviewers of each other’s work. During one of my last consulting trips to Guyana, I reflected on the growth of the team, but I had the distinct impression that they could have been empowered to do more of what I had done there as a consultant. I’ve attempted to “build capacity” as part of my work with the team and I’ve been pleased with the team’s increased skill in many ways, but at the end of the day, the consulting process and procedures with the team have remained very much the same. I recall sitting there in the translation office one afternoon last year, wishing that we had spent more time not only on their translating skills, but also on consultancy skills. What would it have been like if my consulting work there had been built on a model of skills transfer not just for translation, but for the consultant process as well?

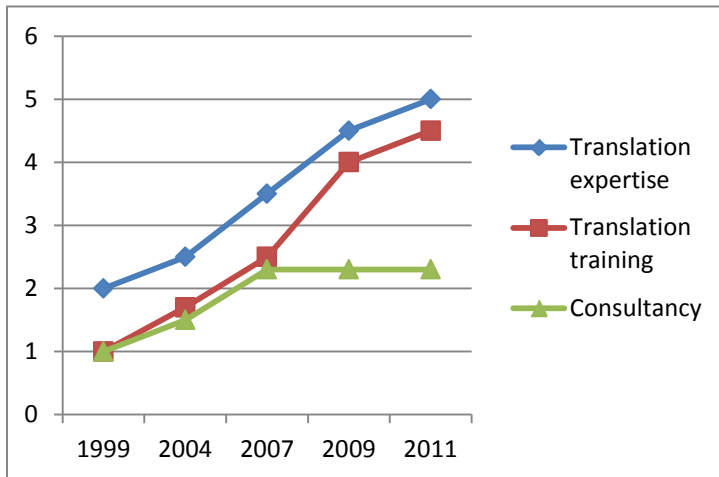
This led me to further reflection on why we even have translation consultants. Where did the notion of translation consulting begin? In *Taking the Word to the World: 50 years of the United Bible Societies*, Robertson attributes the beginning of translation consulting to Eugene Nida. As I recall the history, when Nida arrived at the offices of the American Bible Society in New York, manuscripts of new translations were arriving there for review and approval. Nida knew that it would not be possible for him or anyone sitting in New York to adequately evaluate drafts of translations that were being submitted for publication. Nida felt that the only way to proceed was to evaluate the drafts *in situ* with speakers of the language. Nida soon realized that the task would require the development of a team of consultants who could go and discern the

³ Bryan Harmelink, PhD., is the SIL International Translation Coordinator.

quality of the new translations being done in many parts of the world. In this way, the idea of translation consulting, as we know it, was conceived.

From a historical perspective, translation consulting is very recent phenomenon. The role of the translation consultant was conceived under the particular circumstances of Nida's experience in ABS and, for the past 60 years, the Bible translation movement has benefited from the expertise of consultants who have traveled the world to assist translation teams in their work. In UBS and in other agencies, translation consultants have played a key role in providing Scripture for the world's language communities during this era of Bible translation.

But let's go back to that afternoon I was sitting there in the Wapishana translation office. My work there began in 1999 with training seminars focused on translation principles and procedures. Much of the exegetical work the team does has been learned from the resident SIL colleagues or from the occasional training moments during the consultant sessions. Several of the Wapishana team members have also been privileged to attend the UBS translator training course held in Georgetown. If I may say so myself, the Wapishana team has been well trained and has been working up to the established standards of today's translation agencies, but I'm left with the impression that more should have been possible.



The following chart is an attempt to graphically represent my perception of the situation of the Wapishana team. The top line represents the translation expertise of the bilingual members of the translation team, the middle line represents the translation training component which attempts to keep

pace with the translation expertise of the team members. The bottom line represents the consultant process relative to the team's growth in translation expertise and training. The chart is intended to communicate that even though the team's ability in translation increased throughout the time period in focus, the team's growth in skills related to consultancy reached a plateau. If a different model of consultancy had been in place, it seems that it should have been possible to have the team's consultancy skills keep pace with the other skill areas. It occurred to me that our

current model of consulting reserves tasks that “only the consultant” can do, thereby creating a type of ceiling beyond which the translation team is not expected to go. I suggest that the changing times and changing realities of many translation teams call us to develop a different model of consultancy.

Earlier in this paper I stated that from a historical perspective, translation consulting is a very recent phenomenon. For most of the history of Bible translation, the process did not include translation consultants. I don’t recall ever reading about any translation consultants working with Jerome... It’s fascinating to note that translation consulting is a peculiar phenomenon of the 20th century Bible translation movement. Should we assume that the best response to “We need more consultants!” is to recruit and train more of them? Is there perhaps a way to reconfigure our understanding of team competencies to include consultancy skills, thereby reducing the overall need for consultants themselves?

One of the ways to move forward in this discussion is to tease out the **values** and **functions** of consulting. The values of consulting are all those things we hold dearly like developing a good understanding of the biblical text, exegetical quality, naturalness, to name a few. The functions of consulting are the activities that we believe will enable translation teams to produce translations that in some way embody those values.

Using exegetical quality as an example, the first question we need to ask is: What is the goal of exegesis? There may be many intermediate goals along the way, but it seems that the ultimate objective of exegesis, for translation, is developing an understanding of the biblical text in order to translate it well. If understanding the biblical text is a **value**, there should be different ways that teams can obtain that understanding. This raises another series of questions:

- How does one develop an adequate understanding of the biblical text?
- What role do the biblical languages play in understanding the biblical text?
- What role is played by grammatical exegetical detail in developing this understanding?
- Are there alternative ways to develop this understanding?

Assuming that we value adequate understanding of the biblical text as part of the translation process, I recommend that we consider an adaptation of the IVCF method of [Communal Discovery Study](#) for developing holistic-text understanding. In “My Journey toward Communal Discovery Bible Study/Description of Communal Discovery Bible Study,” Olesberg

states that she: “learned how to observe, to ask questions, and to seek answers from evidence in the text” (2001: 1). Using this method, translators would learn to directly engage with the text so that they also are observing, asking questions, and seeking answers from evidence in the text. Some of the anticipated benefits from this method are that it:

- Promotes holistic understanding in context as opposed to the isolation of exegetical items
- Focuses on questions generated by the participants’ interaction with the text itself
- Gives opportunity for local conceptual engagement with the biblical text
- Encourages interpretation of the biblical text in community
- Does not require literacy for interaction with the text

This is all based on the assumption that good translation results from good understanding of the text to be translated. The fundamental question is how to develop good understanding of the biblical text. The intention is not to *replace exegesis* with *merely reading or hearing* the text, but rather, through the Communal Discovery Study Method (CDSM) to develop a holistic understanding of the text, without the level of abstraction common in traditional exegetical study. It’s important to realize that CDSM is very open-ended, which would allow a well-trained discussion guide or facilitator to incorporate additional information that enhances the team’s understanding. The point, however, is that this additional information would be an integral part of the discovery and discussion. It’s also important to recognize that CDSM, as discussed here, would be most beneficial for translators or teams whose bilingual or multilingual ability allows them to interact effectively with the biblical text in a language other than the one in which translation is being done.

So, how does this relate to developing team **consultancy** skills? A consultant trained in this [method](#) would guide a translation team through an initial phase of training, with the explicit purpose of helping the team grow in its own skills in using CDSM for their study of each book to be translated. With CDSM as a foundation, the team can always gain greater awareness of biblical backgrounds, discourse analysis, and other dimensions of the text in a more holistic fashion. If, for example, insights about discourse structure are brought in as part of the communal discovery process, this should help avoid the potential problem of *analytical abstraction*. I’m concerned that all too often the discourse features of the biblical and vernacular languages are separate spheres of knowledge with very little interaction between them, resulting in minimal impact on the translation process. I don’t question the importance of being familiar

with discourse features; the question, rather, has to do with how to best incorporate this information into the translation process. Do first-language speakers of the language in which the translation is being done benefit from discourse analysis in the same way as analytical outsiders do?

In *Becoming a Translator*, Robinson discusses the difference between subliminal and analytical learning (2003:2). He hopes that translators move in both directions along this continuum of “subliminal-becoming-analytical” and “analytical-becoming-subliminal” (2003:2). My concern is that we tend to focus too quickly on the analytical without adequate consideration of the subliminal. I suggest that CDSM provides a way to build on the subliminal, allowing for context-sensitive insertion of analytical observations, with the goal of assisting translators to develop holistic understanding of the biblical text.

So, in the realm of discourse analysis, only the most pertinent features would be mentioned as translators interact directly with the text. This, of course, requires that the person guiding the discussion be well-prepared to bring these features in as part of the communal discovery process. Based on principles of contrastive analysis or error analysis, the guide would only intervene with explicit discussion of discourse features when necessary, based on a perceived misunderstanding or lack of understanding. If the team demonstrates good understanding of the text, there would be no need to explicate the discourse features of the book or passage. The guide also needs to be sensitive to the narrative dynamics of the text. It’s likely that the best way to “correct” a perceived misunderstanding or lack of understanding is through further interaction with the text itself.

And now we come to the main point: the connection between CDSM and developing team consultancy skills. As stated above, one of the main concerns of a consultant is the ability of the team to understand the biblical text in order to translate it well. Holistic understanding, the goal of CDSM as presented here should, in many ways, build a solid foundation to facilitate movement along the continuum of “subliminal-becoming-analytical.” When translation teams demonstrate good understanding of the biblical text, less time should be needed for checking the overall exegetical quality of the translation. Translation teams should be encouraged to develop this consultancy skill.

CDSM should not be limited to the process of developing understanding of the biblical text, but can also be valuable for reading and evaluating the new translation. If the same method

of interacting with the text and asking questions of the text is implemented for these aspects of the translation process, it seems reasonable to assume that teams will develop their ability to do more and more of what has traditionally been reserved for the consultant.

One of the typical values that consultants bring to the translation process is the fresh perspective of an outside observer. The consultant, however, is not the only one who can add this value to the translation process. We need to remember that the C of CDSM stands for **communal** and encourage the largest community involvement possible. We value exegetical and consulting expertise and I'm sure consultants have played a key role in improving translation quality, just as Nida envisioned. There are, however, some liabilities of our expertise. One liability is the potential for seeing our current consulting practices as the only way to ensure acceptable levels of quality and fidelity in translation. I stated previously that translation consulting, as we know it, is a very recent phenomenon. It's also a very *peculiar* phenomenon of a very brief period in translation history. Just because consulting has developed as we know it today, doesn't mean that it's the best or only way to achieve the values we strive for in translation.

Another liability is that our expertise can sometimes blind us to the wisdom of greater community involvement, as discussed by Surowiecki in *The Wisdom of Crowds*. Regarding crowds vs. experts, he makes the following comment:

...if you can assemble a diverse group of people who possess varying degrees of knowledge and insight, you're better off entrusting it with major decisions rather than leaving them in the hands of one or two people, no matter how smart those people are. (31)

This is not an argument against experts or expertise, but rather a call to place experts in their proper place. In this new era of the global Bible translation movement, the whole process of translation needs to be more community-based. Translator training, translation methodologies, and consulting practices need to be adjusted contextually to the changing realities of who the translators of the 21st century are, including the communities in which they live. I recommend further consideration of CDSM as one way to encourage holistic-text understanding and the development of team consultancy skills.

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Consultant Qualifications

Dr. Larry Jones⁴

The qualifications needed for Bible translation consultants depend on how we conceive the evolving role of a consultant in the 21st Century. Historically, consultants were perceived as the guarantors of faithfulness in a translated text of Scripture. Some publishers will only publish a text of translated scripture if a recognized Bible translation consultant has reviewed the manuscript and certified its faithfulness. Consultants have typically been viewed as an elite cadre of highly-trained professionals whose qualifications were recognized by translation agencies. Now days, we have a pragmatic problem—the current pace of growth in the Bible translation is such that translation projects are no longer able to be serviced by this elite cadre of consultants in a timely way. Furthermore, because the cadre is not expanding it will not be able to keep up with the growth in demand for their services.

The qualifications for Bible translation consultants depend on the roles they are expected to fill. During modern times, the consultants have functioned as trainers of translators, translation advisors, exegetical advisors, and, as noted above, certifiers of faithfulness in translations. These roles do not all require the highest level of expertise. One way of addressing the consultant shortage is to identify the qualifications needed for each role and to develop separate job descriptions and development paths for each. In this way, specialists could be recruited and trained to fill these various roles. Recruiting and training people to fill each of these individual roles should be easier than recruiting and training an individual person to carry out the classic translation consultant role.

A metaphor for this team approach would be a licensed physician working with physician's assistants. Up to now, all consultants have been expected to have attained (or be attaining) qualifications equivalent to that of a medical doctor. What I propose here is that some of a consultant's roles could in fact be carried out by people trained to carry out specific skilled tasks associated with the consultant's role. This is comparable to a physician's assistant who carries out certain tasks, under the aegis of a qualified medical doctor. The next section provides a list of roles that could be carried out by individuals in such a scheme.

Roles and Qualifications

Translation trainer: Training someone to translate scripture into their own language requires that the trainer have some firsthand experience in translation, as well as knowledge of translation methodology. The ideal trainer would probably be an experienced translator from a neighboring language or from the same country who has giftings as a teacher. This person would learn the metalanguage of translation theory and develop a skill in interpreting that theory for budding translation practitioner in his country.

Translation Advisor: Once a translator or team of translators has started to translate Scripture, they benefit from the input of an advisor who can help them think through possible renderings for

⁴ Larry Jones, PhD., is The Seed Company Senior Vice President for Field Programs.

challenging passages and key terms. They often could use advice on program planning, partnerships, and implementation. An effective translation advisor should have both knowledge of the biblical text as well as knowledge of area linguistic and cultural features. Some knowledge of semantics and translation theory would also be helpful. Experience in conducting a Bible translation project would be valuable in such an advisor.

Exegetical advisor: Most translation projects benefit from having someone review the translation for exegetical accuracy. An exegetical reviewer needs to understand translation theory, semantics, and have a good knowledge of the biblical text. This reviewer would help the translation team reflect on their choices of renderings with attention to issues of lost information, added information, and possible misunderstandings of the original text. They do this primarily by interacting with a written back translation. Consultants have found that having some cross-cultural experience and fluency in a language other than English is a great help for exegetical advisors.

Guarantor of translation faithfulness: This is the role we most commonly associate with a translation consultant. It is the role most Bible publishing groups expect an expert consultant to fill. This aim of a consultant check has an important social function in that it gives the Bible publisher, the target audience, and the greater Christian community in that nation confidence that the translation truly is God's word in that language. Even so, those of us who have done a translation consultant check with languages we do not speak know that gaps remain regardless of the procedure we used to check the translation. In reality, we cannot really fully guarantee that the translation is a faithful rendering of the meaning of the original text. I have found that consultants who are too preoccupied with this responsibility in the course of their check can compromise their ability to give substantial assistance to the translators. Instead of being perceived as a counselor and coach, the consultant becomes a quality control screener whose relationship with the translators can seem critical and unhelpful.

The Challenge

Can a highly qualified translation consultant learn to manage a team of skilled practitioners serving the translation teams? Can Bible publishers and the Christian public at large recognize and validate the service this kind of team approach can render to the translation effort? Will publishers and the public respect these roles in the same ways they respect the classical role of a single consultant?" Will translation consultants, whose entire careers have been vested in the classic paradigm, be willing and able to move to a different posture in their role, one that is better aligned with the twenty-first century environment?

Conclusion

The role of the professional translation consultant is to some degree tied to the classic role of the Bible agencies as stewards of God's Word on behalf of the Church. Increasingly, the Bible agencies will need to recast our role to be servants of the global Church to enable her to steward the Word. I believe this is the only way we can resource the growing enterprise of Bible translation to the glory of God.

Translation Checking through Group Consultation

Dr. Véroni Krüger and Dr. Barry Funnell⁵

Introduction

Group or simultaneous translation consultation has been developed as a way of economizing as much as possible on time and effort in Bible translation consultation. We see this as part of the ongoing quest to think innovatively about Bible translation consultation. Group consultations are not necessarily suited to simultaneous revisions of major language Bibles, where the receptor languages are very divergent, e.g. French and Spanish (See Working with Multiple LWCs later in this paper). The language cluster project approach, with its emphasis on group consultation, is primarily geared to the unfinished task of Bible translation, i.e. the focus is on Bibleless peoples and first time translations. As far as can be ascertained, The Word for the World (*TWFTW*), working in partnership with *Pioneer Bible Translators* in Tanzania, pioneered this approach, with Dr. Barry Funnell providing much of the leadership in the new approach. The first such consultation in 2007 involved six translation teams. Simultaneous consultation was subsequently done with eight teams by Du Toit van der Merwe, one of the guest consultants working with *TWFTW*. Manie van den Heever, *TWFTW*'s International Director of Translations, followed the approach working with six teams in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2009.

Consultation Workshop

A forerunner of simultaneous checking was the bringing together of different translation teams, all working on the same portion of Scripture, for a workshop. *TWFTW* had never actually used this model of consultation before, but it is described here for the sake of background. A typical day of consultation in such a workshop would be organized as follows:

- All the teams attend a presentation on a particular Scripture passage. This presentation may be handled by a member of one of the teams, or by a consultant. Topics may include translation background, discourse structure, translation issues (lexical, grammatical, semantic), exegetical issues, important stylistic features, etc. There is ample opportunity for translators to ask questions.
- The teams then go to work separately on the portion that was discussed, with the attending consultant/s circulating among the teams for the rest of the day, to assist them wherever it is needed.
- There may be a concluding session with all teams together at the end of each day. At this session, teams have an opportunity to ask further questions, highlight problems, or share

⁵ Véroni Krüger, DLIT., is President of The Word for the World. Dr. Barry Funnell is the Southern Africa Regional Director of The Word for the World. This paper is an excerpt, with additional material from Barry, from "Training Bible Translation Consultants" by Véroni Krüger.

insights gained during the checking sessions. The consultant/s may also comment on what was perceived while working with the teams. This daily concluding session may be an important tool in the planning of the next day's opening presentation.

A precondition of this type of consultant checking is a high degree of skill among the translators. There should be at least one person in each team with a degree of training that enables him/her to work at the level of an exegete, or consultant-in-training. This is necessary, since much of the checking is done by the team working independently.

Simultaneous Consultation

Simultaneous consultation entails a group of translation teams all working together on the actual process of consultation. The translation teams are kept together throughout the day, all participating in what really amounts to the consultant checking the translated passage verse by verse.

The teams take turns reading their translation of the passage to be checked. Checking of the translation is then done by oral back translation, in much the same manner as a consultant would traditionally check a translation. Frequent reference is made to the translations of the other teams, enabling them to "correct" their versions. The consultant will have the necessary knowledge of the original text and should have adequate experience of potential translation problems, to ask relevant questions of the other translation teams. When one passage has been thoroughly checked, the next passage is tackled, with a different translation team reading their translation.

Additional Notes by Dr. Barry Funnell

Perhaps it needs to be stated that the translation teams must sit together and remain focused in their work all the time. One translator does the required changes to their work, while another person makes notes on the hard copy of their translation, which is being checked. They make notes of areas which need more work, such as restructuring, etc., at a later date. Each team gets a chance to do a verbal back translation of a chapter, while the others listen, check their own work, then and update their translations as needed.

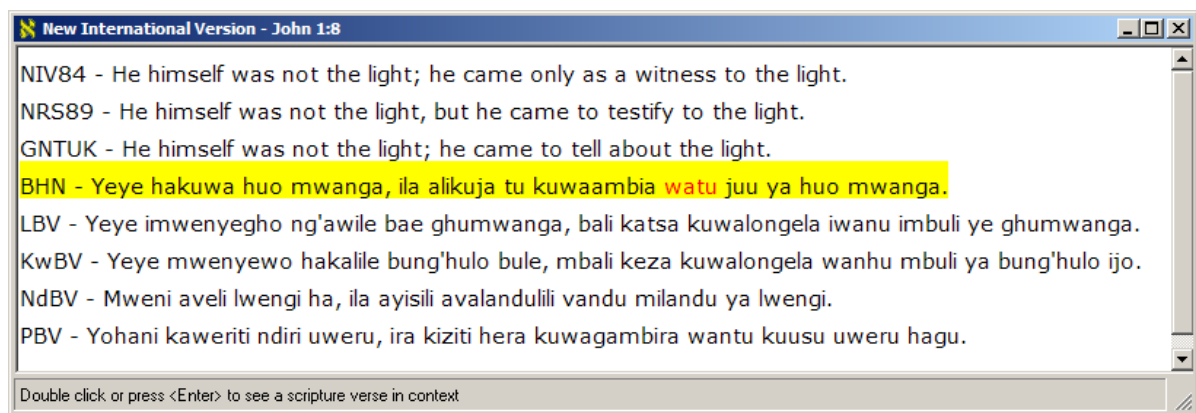
Each exegete takes responsibility for a team (or two or three teams - as we have checked up to 8 languages simultaneously) to ensure they have understood the concepts and have made necessary changes to the text. The exegete also takes notes to be able to follow up changes that should have been made.

The translation consultant doing this type of checking work should have some exposure to the languages to a certain extent, otherwise it is difficult to keep up with the translators. It is helpful to work in a team of consultants. It is also a good place to have a more senior consultant with a less experienced consultant working together in this context as a training experience. The team of

exegetes are also receiving more exposure and training in this context so they can improve their skills.

The following is how a consultant who had never been part of a simultaneous checking session described his observation of the organisation of such a session⁶:

Each team was present with three translators. Each team had at least one computer with them. The three exegetes working with these teams were there as well, including the coordinator of *TWFTW* and me, a total of 17 people. A data projector displayed all four languages (in Paratext) on the wall, so everyone could see the four languages at a glance. I myself used SLT with all four languages in one scripture collection. This is even more practical than Paratext because you see every verse as a separate unit. This allows you to easily notice if a verse in one translation is considerably longer or shorter than the corresponding verse in the other translations, as illustrated in the screen shot below.



We started checking John. The four teams took turns doing the back translation, one chapter for each team. The other teams listened carefully while comparing their own translation with the other three.

After the back translation was given out, I asked for input from the floor. The three exegetes gave a lot of feedback, but the other translators commented on the work of their colleagues in the other languages, as well. It was interesting to see how some of the translators spontaneously started correcting their own translations after seeing the work of their colleagues. The problem is that they have a tendency to borrow heavily from the Swahili text, thinking that their own language does not have the right equivalent for a particular word from the biblical text. However, when they see how some of the other language translators have rendered a particular term in a more idiomatic way, they decide to adopt a similar strategy. So even if I would not have given my own input, this way of working would already have been very beneficial for each of the four projects. "But of course I did give my own input, as well. Let me explain my basic strategy.

⁶ De Blois, Reinier, *UBS consultant, working with the Morogoro Cluster Project in Tanzania.*

1. First I compared the length of the four translations. This gave me important clues as to the completeness of each of the four verses (see screenshot above).
2. Secondly, I compared the phrase structure of the four. This helped me identify the different elements of the sentence. If three translations have a similar phrase structure and the fourth is different, then you know you have to look closer at number four.
3. The third step is to identify and compare the key terms in each verse. Once you have identified the key terms in a verse (like the word for “light” in this particular case), it is relatively easy to understand the way the translation is structured. And what you do not understand you simply ask about. At first the process seems slow, but it gets easier after every verse.
4. Finally, of course, as a consultant, knowing the pitfalls in each particular verse, you ask the standard questions. It does not make much difference whether you ask them for one language or for four.

Preconditions for simultaneous consultations are as follow:

- * The languages in the different projects belong to a cluster, that is, they are linguistically and/or culturally similar. The cluster approach attempts to set up projects which are located in relatively close proximity geographically and linguistically, have similar translation needs (e.g. first time translations), and have a shared centralised administration. Although the translation teams work in offices located in their language areas, and are visited by exegetes in their language areas, they are brought to a central venue for joint training and group consultations. The teams move at a similar pace thus making group consultation possible as the teams all require similar books of the Bible to be checked. This saves money on administrative costs, fosters community spirit among the translators and exegetes, and greatly facilitates communal checking.
- * The translation approach (e.g. Literary Functional Equivalence) of all the teams needs to be the same, which can be achieved through the joint training sessions given to the teams.
- * It is also helpful if all the teams are working from the same source text or texts. In Tanzania, the translators depend heavily on the Swahili *Habari Njema* text, and they also use the Good News Bible and the NIV as their source texts. Translation weaknesses in the *Habari Njema* are often carried over into their translations, which can be addressed across the board in all teams. In a similar vein, where excellent cultural adaptations have been made in *Habari Njema*, which may have not been implemented by the teams, these can also be implemented.

Advantages include:

- * Great economizing in time, effort and cost. The arithmetic is easy: rather than a consultant spending the time and effort required for a consultation as many times over again as there are teams to be worked with, the consultant spends that time and effort once, with all the

teams together. If he/she is doing simultaneous checking with eight teams, it is eight times less travel!

- * Benefits are derived from the input from different teams working on languages that are related. As in any group discussion, answers to questions are often obtained before the questions are asked by listening to the responses of others.

A possible disadvantage may be that the attention of the consultant is divided among the teams. This may lead to less diligent checking. However, the advantages noted above probably outweigh this possible disadvantage. Additionally, if procedures are adapted to the situation of simultaneous consultation, the risk of diminished diligence may be completely avoided.”

Working with Multiple LWCs⁷

Group consultation could work in a cross border translation project, as occurs for example between Tanzania and Mozambique where the national language of the translators is different (English/Swahili and Portuguese respectively). In this situation, the cross border receptor languages, Makonde and Makua, are closely related, so these translations can still be evaluated by the consultant and the group of translators and exegetes. Whatever is shared by the consultant, whether it is exegetical explanations, evaluation of the text, or training in a certain area, his/her comments can be translated into English, Swahili or Portuguese by competent interpreters. Likewise, comments from translators can also be translated from Portuguese into English for the benefit of the whole group and vice versa.

In Kenya and Tanzania, English is the medium of instruction in secondary and tertiary education, so there are varying levels of competency in English. Even so, most translators are more comfortable expressing themselves in Swahili, even if they have generally good ability in English. Therefore, it is a great benefit if the consultant working in these countries has a working knowledge of Swahili. On several occasions when a general change is being suggested by the consultant in English, his/her comment will need to be translated into Swahili for the benefit of the entire group.

As so many of the translation tools and resources are available in English, and not Swahili, translators are encouraged to improve their English competence. As long as one member of a translation team is competent in English, he/she is able to communicate the concepts to the team. When the entire team is poor in English, an exegete who is competent in Swahili and English will need to assist the team more closely in the group consultation. It needs to be stressed that the consultant should only move on to the next verse once all queries and issues have been dealt with, or at least understood, so that the team can make note of the suggested change and restructure their text in their own time.

This type of simultaneous translation has also been applied in the Kerala cluster project in India, where one of the people groups speak and write in Tamil and the other five groups speak

⁷ Language of Wider Communication

Malayalam. A disadvantage of having translation projects from different major language groups is that it slows the consulting process down. Additionally, the more culturally variant the groups are, the less they benefit from each other's cultural adaptations and translation solutions. Working in two major languages simultaneously also slows the work down. Even so, the practical and social benefit of teams working together fosters unity and mutual understanding and respect for one another's cultures, even if they are culturally divergent. The Tamil source text had weaknesses which the Malayalam highlighted and vice versa, so the communal approach benefitted each of the teams. People who are more exposed to multilingualism tend to be more tolerant and even seem to desire to improve their competence as multilingual speakers.

Conclusion

The shortage of consultants is critical in most Bible Agencies. The collective goal of several Bible agencies of a translation project starting in each language with a definite need by the year 2025, and the complete Bible in each group by 2050, is achievable by working through cluster projects and using a group consultation approach to translation checking. A brief look at the Morogoro cluster in Tanzania will serve to illustrate this.

A bottle neck exists in translation consultation. There are 31,100 verses in the Bible and if a consultant checked at a rate of 100 verses per day in a particular language team, it would take 311 days to check every verse. If we say there are 253 working days in a year (taking off weekends and bank holidays) it would mean a consultant would need to spend 1 year and 3 months full-time on each Bible. If he/she checked ten languages individually verse by verse - it would take over 12 years of full time checking. This doesn't even include the time for travel to and from projects. The average translation team sees a consultant 4 weeks per year and if 100 verses were checked per day over the 20 days it would mean 2000 verses checked. Thus it would take over 15 years to do the whole Bible verse by verse, and 150 years to check 10 languages using this method!

Recently Dr. Funnell was able to consultant check each verse of 1 & 2 Corinthians in eight languages in ten days (i.e. 689 verses times 8 = 5512 verses). This is equal to eighteen percent of the total number of verses in the Bible. Simultaneous checking is very efficient, especially with well trained teams. A comment made to one group to improve their translation work can be applied to all the groups simultaneously. For example, in 1 Corinthians, 1.7, most groups had used the term "spiritual gifts", which is not clear in Bantu. However, the suggestion of wording that term as "gifts given by God's Spirit" was implemented in all eight groups (instead of me having to have said this on eight different occasions). All the teams seem to stay focused.

Importantly, the African concept of working in a group seems to provide stimulation and motivation for all the translators. There is a healthy sense of competition in terms of quality of work produced as well as good cross-pollination of ideas for key Biblical terms and descriptive phrases for foreign or unknown ideas in the Bible. All teams are eager to be ready for the consultation events as they do not want to be left behind. A well translated verse is "show cased" to others which brings a greater sense of pride in work done, and can also be implemented by the other groups.

Group consultations also provide good training opportunities, not only to translators, but also to exegetes, and hence we are finding from one consultation to the next the quality of work is steadily improving in all teams. A consultant can easily miss an error in the text, but with several eyes looking over his/her shoulder several problems are picked up which could have been overlooked. Approximately 75% of the NT has been checked in 10 languages of the Morogoro cluster using the simultaneous checking method since March 2007⁸, and our goal is to have all ten NT's ready for publishing by the end of 2012.

⁸ Historically we have done simultaneous checking in Morogoro of the following books: Mark (6 languages) in Apr 2007 by Du Toit & Funnell; Luke (7) in Dec 2007 by Du Toit & Funnell; John (4) in Jan 2008 by De Blois; John (6) in Aug 2008 by Du Toit and Funnell; Matthew (8) Nov 2008 and Acts (8) in Aug 2009 by Du Toit & Funnell; Galatians (7) and Ephesians (6) in Mar 2010 by Van Der Heever; and Romans (10) in Mar 2010 (Willits); 1 & 2 Cor (8) in Nov 2010 by Funnell and Kamande.

Rearrangements: New Ways of Doing Old Things

Dr. Gilles Gravelle⁹

In *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation*, Steven Johnson (2010) suggests that change happens when you take a configuration and rearrange it in new ways. His point is that most new ideas are not the result of something coming from nothing. It has more to do with aggregating proven things and rearranging them in new ways for greater effects. An example of this is the work of a business man named Johannes Gutenberg. He is popularly known in the West as the person who invented the printing press in 1441. Actually, printing presses with removable type face had been around for about 400 years. Gutenberg is more accurately remembered for how he rearranged existing printing press technology. He also added the screw press, borrowed from wine makers, and he devised a method for rapidly removing and replacing metal type face. His rearrangements and improvements resulted in cheaper more commercially viable printing. In other words, he opened up fast and inexpensive document reduplication to the masses.

Bible translation work has benefited from improvements in linguistic understanding and translation theory over the years, which resulted in improved ways of producing and completing translation projects. The role of a translation consultant is a relatively recent development in the long history of Bible translation. The first translators were typically first-language speakers who translated from the Latin, Greek or Hebrew texts into their own language. They were capable exegetes so they didn't need the help of an outside consultant. Even so, using Martin Luther's translation practice as an example, his work was not entirely done in isolation from his community, as romanticized artist images portray him. Rather, his work was done within the community often through lively discussions over the theological key terms and concepts he was translating. The role of the outside exegetical expert was not needed until the recent modern period when translation done by outsider translators and first-language translators began to accelerate during the late twentieth-century.

By this time, most of the translators were not necessarily working directly from the Greek or Hebrew texts anymore. Instead, they commonly made good utilization of a broad range of exegetical resources that were now widely available. The outsider translator usually worked with a few capable first-language speakers to produce good quality translation drafts. To broaden group involvement, the translator usually tested the translation with a small number of people from the community. That often involved those people answering a series of questions about the text under review. Even if the translator was a first-language speaker of the language they were translating for, this translation model was still applied with only small adjustments made to the method. With this method of translation, the community heavily depends on only a few experts to achieve success in

⁹ Gilles Gravelle, PhD., is The Seed Company Director of Research & Innovation. This section is an excerpt—with some additional material—from Gilles Gravelle. 2011. *When Change Happen: Crowd Sourcing and Bible translation*, [Unpublished manuscript].

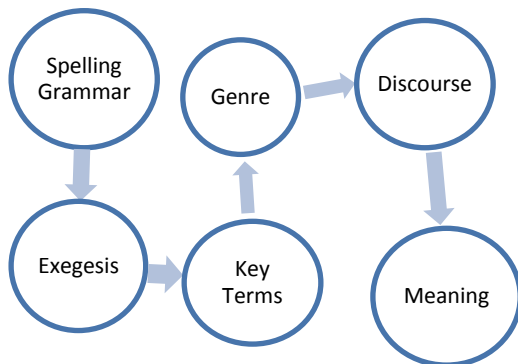
the translation work. Diversity is clearly lacking with this model of translation. Diversity helps because it adds multiple perspectives that inform decision making.

Crowd-sourcing Translation Drafting and Checking

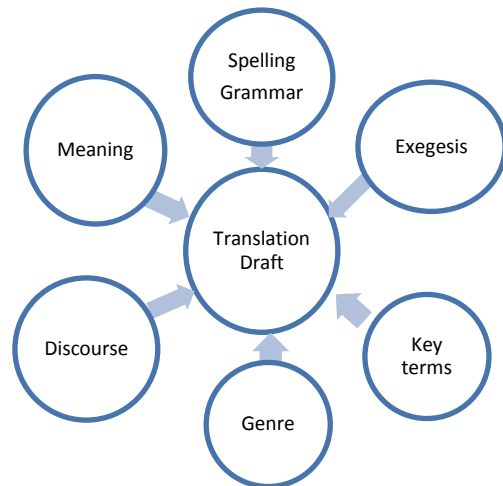
Crowd sourcing, according to James Surowiecki (2010), is increasing the range of skills and abilities applied to an effort by insuring that more people are involved. He demonstrates through a series of stories and events in history how the collective wisdom (or collective intelligence) of a large mix of disparate people (the crowd) is wiser than a small group of homogenous thinkers, even if some of the group members are experts. The author's point is not that the intelligence of a few experts is irrelevant, but rather the intelligence of a few trained people alone cannot guarantee different perspectives on a problem. "Grouping only smart people [or experts] doesn't work well because smart people...tend to resemble each other in what they do."

The creative processes described by the other contributors to this document, such as working through cluster projects; doing simultaneous checking with several translation projects; spreading the consultant's role among a broader team of specialized workers; and studying the text for exegetical understanding through community discussions are all ways that apply crowd sourcing to Bible translation. Significantly, each part of the process is applied in a simultaneous and iterative fashion. This way the group aggregates a wider set of skills and knowledge which surpasses the expertise of the small group of trained translators or an individual consultant at any given time. Compare this arrangement (B) with the traditional Western arrangement (A) where the parts of translation are carried out more or less in an incremental and linear fashion by a small group. With (A), by the time the translation draft reaches the wider community for comment it has largely become codified and therefore less open to major revisions.¹⁰

A. Linear, incremental



B. Simultaneous, iterative



¹⁰ Soon after a major language translation, Such as English, is presented to the masses, the masses begin to send in recommendations for improvements, but those won't be applied for another 10-15 years.

Who can best assure translation fidelity and quality?

A core role of a translation consultant is to confirm fidelity. It is an expert's confirmation for the wider community, and it paves the way for publication. A term we often hear associated with this function is "quality control". Naturally, because of our high view of Scripture, we want to apply methods to the translation checking process that will insure and confirm that a translation is of high exegetical quality. We should do no less. However, how we define what quality is and how we determine the best practices for quality assurance is not as black and white as we may have thought it was during earlier times. First-language translators are linguistically and culturally intuitive, whereas an outside translation consultant is not (See Heibert 2006:100). Therefore, the classical consultant checking methods may not leverage this intuitive understanding in doing translation and checking translation work. The classical one-to-one and verse-by-verse method might produce an exegetically tight translation sooner, but will this method produce a translation that is culturally engaging if the cross-cultural consultant leaves his/her mark on the translation through the checking process, as we typically do? If in a cluster project, translation and exegesis is seen as an iterative process with a larger segment of the community involved, then it could be that the translation may indeed be exegetically un-tight during the early stages of the work, but it could communicate meaning more naturally and be more culturally engaging sooner. As the translators and the community of reviewers are taught to grapple with the text, the exegetical quality should improve over time as an outcome.

This sort of broad community involvement can greatly improve every aspect of the translation. One particularly significant area that would benefit by wider community involvement is the development of key theological terms. With open community collaboration, theological terms are not viewed like computer source code to be tinkered with. But as flawed computer source code can degrade an entire software program, likewise weak or inaccurately communicated theological terms can greatly weaken or degrade a translation. The notion that a small group of translators testing terms with a small group of people can insure exegetical accuracy of those terms may be overstated.

When it comes to quality control, self-monitoring for accuracy seems to be a natural occurrence when larger groups of people collaborate on something they highly value. They develop a greater sense of ownership. This was true of the Linux open source code experiment. It motivated many people to guard the integrity of the source code because of the value they placed on it. This notion is well documented throughout the world where open collaboration occurs, especially through the use of social media (see Shirky 2010).

The crowd sourcing concept has major implications when it comes to who indeed confirms the quality and accuracy of a translation. The traditional consultant method still depends on a very small group of specialists who are typically cultural outsiders. The outside consultants do not generally know the language they are checking, therefore they depend on an oral or a written translation of the work under review produced in their own language. This means they actually analyze someone's translation through the cognitive filter of their own language and culture.

Consultants at best only spot check translations. That is, they may look at every verse or just spot check whole Scripture books, but they only gain a glimpse at what is in the translation during any given check. This method is time consuming, but it can yield some reasonably good evidence in regard to accuracy. Confirming quality is probably a lesser outcome. While their analysis is helpful, it is hardly exhaustive. Yet, it is the consultant's confirmation of fidelity that allows a translation to be published.

Applying the notion of crowd sourcing to this area means that a wider community, (the crowd) with guidance from experts (the consultants), can confirm the quality and accuracy of a translation far better than a small group of 1-3 translators working with an outside translation consultant. Indeed, according to the crowd sourcing concept, the consultants are already part of the crowd and so their expertise is being applied along with all the other skills and abilities the larger community brings to the process. Therefore, applying the traditional consultant review as the last step in a crowd-sourced translation project seems redundant by that time, if the consultants are monitoring and guiding the process more regularly, probably by means of the internet and face-to-face meetings. This is a rearrangement of the translation parts that could change the way translations are reviewed and approved for publication. It would also remove the bottleneck that develops when a translation team waits for an available consultant to come and check their work.

Summary

A very significant reason for enabling wider community involvement in the translation drafting and checking process is because it engages the community in reading (or hearing) and discussing the source text and the translated text and then grappling with its meaning. They must work together to produce the best translation they can for their people. As a result, they own the translation from the very start because they see that their own contributions make a difference in the translation work. This is the difference between a community doing translation together for one another in comparison to a small closed group of people doing translation "for" the community. With the former method, the community is more likely to use the translation in a greater variety of ways sooner because it is, after all, a result of their collaborative effort. With the small closed translation team approach, these effects are not usually realized on a large scale until long after the translation is completed and handed over to the community for them to use, if they ever widely use the translation at all.

In places where Bible translation is illegal and the community cannot work together openly on a translation project, they can work together on a secure internet collaboration site. Open collaboration with anonymity provides the best of both worlds. In fact, a significant number of the large unreached people groups that need Bible translations fall within this category. Because of this, more of the cultural and religious insiders are taking on the daunting and sometimes dangerous task of translating "for" their people. Given their cultural and religious contexts, they have a lot to grapple with and with very little help. Therefore, it would be a shame if people in these situations were not able build their own crowd-sourced translation work on top of existing internet, web, and smart phone platforms for the translation work to progress faster, and with greater input from the

community. If they did, I tend to believe that the effect of that translation collaboration would be felt soon after it began.

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Final Synopsis

Two major recurring themes from all four contributions to this document are:

1. The historical birth of the translation consultant is a relatively recent event, occurring at the climax of Western mission expansion. How does this role function in these indigenizing and globalizing times? Hence, the authors' desire to find a way forward.
2. Translation practice, such as exegeting, drafting, testing, consultant checking, etc., should be applied more as a communal practice, such as:
 - Evaluating how the traditional view of the Bible Society consultant as guarantor of translation fidelity could shift to the translation community so they can be better equipped to be the stewards of God's Word for their own community.
 - Understanding the biblical text as part of the exegetical process means applying different ways that teams can obtain that understanding, such as through oral communal learning through group discussions and group studies.
 - Seeing the exegetical process as more of an iterative learning process for the translators and the receiving community, rather than an incremental step in the translation process.
 - Spreading the various tasks that a consultant typically does among a wider group of community-based specialists (individuals trained to do a certain task).
 - Consultants leveraging their skills and experience across a larger number of translation projects simultaneously for acceleration and efficiency, but also for equipping translators and national consultants with the same skills in the process, which leads to improved quality along the way.

None of the authors suggested the role of the consultant is no longer needed. However, all four authors call into question, in one way or another, how an occasional one-on-one consultant check can realistically guarantee fidelity. The authors suggest that if the role of the consultant was more like the latter description (See last bullet point above), then the translators and their community could be better equipped to evaluate their own work for exegetical accuracy and quality. This role has more to do with "fruitful practices" rather than what we consultants have traditionally called "best practices."

Finally, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, speed is not the only motivation for re-evaluating the role of the consultant, although urgency for practical Scriptural solutions to so many pressing social needs is certainly a motivating factor. Quality is still a high level goal because it is God's Word. Furthermore, this re-evaluation is still an eschatological issue in that the Lord's instruction to make disciples of all nations through all languages compels us to diligently continue the work until the Master returns. Hopefully, reflection with humility will help us discover better ways forward as we work toward this goal.