Subject July 2023 ITS Newsletter

International Translation Services (ITS) works in collaboration with colleagues in SIL and other agencies to creatively steward and advance the translation practices, tools, methods, and training necessary to enable a supportive environment for individuals and communities to flourish and engage with Scripture.

We value: Interconnectedness. Capacity Building. Diversity. Innovation.

July 2023

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Innovation can be hidden in incongruities

- Greg Dekker - *International Translation Services Director*

In his 2002 article, Peter F. Drucker, known for his ground-breaking contributions to business management theory and economics, describes, in one example, how innovations can result from incongruities. He describes an incongruity between expectations and results. Early in the 1900's, shipbuilders expected that faster ships with lower fuel consumption would lower shipping costs due to less time at sea. But costs remained the same or increased. What they did not realize was that the real costs were due to time the ship spent in port. Faster loading and unloading and use of containers drastically improved shipping economies.

We are experiencing incongruities in Bible translation. Our expectation is that with all the excellent resources, training, partnership, and other support available to conduct Bible translation, greater efficiencies in production should result. We may be looking in the wrong place. Let's keep looking!

In the same article, Drucker defines innovation as, "The effort to create purposeful, focused change in an enterprise's economic or social potential." Innovation is so important to the growth and success of any enterprise.

There is much being done these days to innovate in our translation and quality assurance processes. All of which are very encouraging. One example: David Duncan of Wycliffe Canada is leading a team under Wycliffe Canada to develop a computer-assisted software program called The Bible Translator's Assistant (TBTA). It is not an AI-based tool, but more akin to the next generation of CARLA with the added benefit of an internal source text built on Translators Notes. TBTA is already in use on the field and produces very good drafts that are then edited by national translators. TBTA is not able to produce more than the initial draft which then must be checked by translators, community groups, and consultants. David states, "The idea of the computer replacing the whole (or even most) of the process is fanciful." He estimates that the TBTA system may reduce the overall translation project time by 30-40%, whereas AI approaches may exceed that by a margin with the right conditions.

David states that the benefits of TBTA are a higher degree of accuracy (than AI), and a presentation which is more user-friendly for less experienced translators. The main concept behind TBTA is to produce a simple yet clear draft in the target language that allows the national translator to gain understanding in their own language, rather than the onerous task of internalizing from a foreign language source. From observations so far, this has led to national translators producing a more natural translation with less borrowed terms.

David goes on to say this, "There are other tools in development such as Scripture Forge, FLExTrans, AQuA that each have different strengths... I have been fascinated that, especially over the last five years, there has been a sort of technical renaissance in the research of new tools and methods. Each of the tools in development seem to scratch a different itch and I believe there is purpose behind that. I like to say you need a full toolbox to build a boat. Another heartening fact is all the researchers are working *together*, sharing ideas, technologies, and data towards the common goal of helping God's Word become available to more people sooner, *without* sacrificing quality." Thanks, David. Well said.

For the benefit of those still without God's Word in a language that serves them well, let's keep looking for incongruities and the other events in the translation task that may be hiding innovations. But let's interrogate our methods and do our best to avoid catastrophic failure. Getting the translation task wrong has serious consequences. Let's not ignore time-tested methods. And let's practice project monitoring and learning to make sure projects are producing the quality results we expect. And, let's continue to trust God for the outcomes because ultimately, they are not under our control. Scripture carries the truth about how we are to live our lives. This truth entails what we refer to as the Biblical worldview. We do well to get it right in translation.

Global Consultant Pool Update

- Viji Mathew

The *Global Consultant Pool* is currently serving 15 plus different translation checking needs in various continents. Along with addressing various checking requests, we are also focusing on mentoring a number of consultants in training and a specialized sign language assignment in Mexico. Dr. Daniel Block led our most recent CoP on translation-related issues, which focused on the book of Ezekiel and was well appreciated. Our next CoP on professional development is scheduled for 8 August 2023.

We want to thank the Lord for the health of our consultants. Some of us have experienced significant health issues, yet God has been in charge. We appreciate your prayers as we go forward and collaborate with the different teams in consultant checking needs.

Recently, Keith Benn and Lloyd Milligan have retired from active service in GCP. We sincerely appreciate their invaluable services to our organization, which have had an incredible impact on several translation projects and staff. We wish them the very best.

Translation Training and Development Updates

- Phil King - *ITS Training and Development*

I've spent most of the past month heading up the 'Meaning and Communication' module at Moorlands College here in the UK. We've been moving towards a more blended learning approach, so I enjoyed creating some new independent learning activities like 'spend 30 minutes talking to ChatGPT about Relevance Theory and then write 5 sentences on a forum summarizing the key insights'. Do let me know any innovative ways you are including AI in your translation training!

In the middle of the module I also had the privilege of joining the online ETEN mid-year summit, together with Greg Dekker. So, I thought it might be helpful to share a bit about ETEN here, at least from my perspective.

Who is ETEN? ETEN (*Every Tribe Every Nation*) started in 2010 through the vision of a group of American philanthropists and Bible Translation organization CEOs to see greater collaboration and interdependence between organizations working together to end Bible poverty. It's now structured as a collective impact alliance of 11 core principal implementation partners (including SIL) and 5 resourcing partners. Mission Mutual acts as a backbone organization, and illumiNations provides connections to wider Christian resource collaboration.

ETEN is looking at other ways of broadening involvement, with church planting networks, local church leaders and disciple-making movements, and also now includes two affinity groups on Oral Bible Translation and Sign Language, which connect further partners (including YWAM, DOOR International and Faith Comes by Hearing).

ETEN's overarching vision is 'every verse current', for every person to have access to all of Scripture, with a translation that is up-to-date. However, the current focus is the 2033 All Access Goals, as a milestone on the journey: 95% of global population having access to the full Bible; 99.96% of global population with access to a New Testament; 100% of global population with access to at least some portion of Scripture. The 2033 date was chosen out of a prayerful reflection on how wonderful it would be if access to God's Word arrived in the 2000th year after Pentecost. More specifics on the goals are available on the ETEN website.

How does ETEN work? ETEN has a number of structures to support its vision: the steering committee of CEOs and resource partners; the affinity groups, working groups and the innovation lab. Through these different groups ETEN seeks to pursue a synergy between foundational, *established* ways of working (based on agencies, with typical workforces, training and partners) and the fueling of *emerging* innovations (based on church networks, with atypical workforces, training and partners), covering such areas as Church-based translation, Artificial Intelligence and crowd-based technology. Further information about how ETEN works, progress towards goals, and the established / emerging synergy can be found in the Illuminations 'Forward Progress and Strategic Momentum' brochure that was shared at the summit.

What is the innovation Lab doing? Much of the recent ETEN mid-year summit was focused on updates from the Innovation Lab, which is now structured into four current priorities:

- The Bible Aquifer (open-licensed, high quality resources for understanding and translating the BIble)
- Quality Assurance (flexible and scalable processes and resources for achieving trustworthy Bible translations)
- Assisted Translation Technology (use of advanced tools to accelerate production of QA resources)
- Crowd-sourcing (harnessing the untapped potential of global networks of participants to that end)

These priorities are being pursued through three essential functions - exploring opportunities, developing resources and connecting networks.

Tim Jore (Aquifer) gave an example of the development of French study notes using open-licensed content and AI tools to translate them. Andy Kellogg shared the QA group's vision that the global church is empowered for quality translation rooted in their experience and expertise. Koos Fouche talked about the variety of technology assisted approaches (including SIL's Scripture Forge) and 'Project Catapult' which is looking to start 50 languages with assisted technology in 2024. More info about the lab can be found at https://etenlab.notion.site.

So what? For me, the ETEN summit was another good opportunity to listen to our partners and their passions, and to see and hear what God is doing in the world through the increased collaboration across organisations and networks. I appreciated the opportunity to understand better the different hopes and aspirations, and to hear several affirmations of what SIL is contributing as its part in this alliance, such as ProgressBible, Scripture Forge and AQUA.

Christy Liner is now SIL's Director of ETEN Partnerships, so please get in touch with her or Greg or myself if you have further questions about SIL and ETEN. If you are staff of SIL (or any other organization actively connected to ETEN), you can also join the ETEN Community Hub (currently over 800 members), which is available on your browser or as a mobile app. Here you can have conversations with others from different organizations, keep up to date with information, and join in praying together.

New Consultants
Emma Kuipers & Hélène Ballarin

Emma Kuipers - *Africa*

Congratulations to Emma Kuipers (SIL Chad). Drew Maust (*SIL Francophone Africa Domain Team Leader for Translation*) announced that the *SIL Accreditation Committee for Translation Consultants* in Africa has reviewed her dossier and accepted the recommendation that Emma be declared a translation consultant. She was mentored by Jackie Hainaut (SIL Chad).

Emma has been working with SIL Chad since 2007, initially as a linguistics specialist helping several language groups with their orthographies and literacy materials.

In 2011, she began assisting the Migaama New Testament project as an exegete and team coordinator. The NT was completed and typeset in 2020, even with the global pandemic happening. She has also been involved with oral Bible storying, and is currently helping a new team take their first steps in translating the book of Genesis.

Emma's CiT time included supervised checking sessions with teams across Chad, learning by observing experienced translation consultants in action, and participating in the Francophone Africa translation consultant training. She has especially enjoyed teaching workshops and courses with SIL Chad and at i-Delta (Francophone Africa). Emma has an MA in Liberal Arts (St. John's College) and an MA in Biblical Languages (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) and is now doing further self-study of Hebrew as most teams here in Chad are working on Old Testament translations.

Hélène Ballarin - *Africa*

Congratulations to Hélène Ballarin (SIL Togo-Benin). Drew Maust (*SIL Francophone Africa Domain Team Leader for Translation*) announced that the *SIL Accreditation Committee for Translation Consultants* in Africa has reviewed her dossier and accepted the recommendation that Hélène be declared a translation consultant. She was mentored by Joseph Koabike (SIL Togo-Benin), Sharon Nordley, and Anne-Marie Gimenez.

Hélène has been working in Francophone Africa since 1993 when she had an initial visit with the Nawdm translation project, north Togo (SIL Togo-Benin). In 1995 she joined that team working as an exegete and linguist, specializing in the epistles, more specifically the Pauline epistles. Faced with the difficulties that this team encountered in natural translation, she undertook further studies in narrative linguistics. The translation team followed the training of Stephen Levinson, studying the textual grammar of this language to translate the Gospel of John. Comprehension checking showed that this translation was being favorably received by the general population. Further research on the analysis of argumentative texts helped the team to translate the epistles. This then led to training the translators in an oral approach in the translation process in order to obtain the naturalness of the language while maintaining accuracy. The New Testament was completed in 2013.

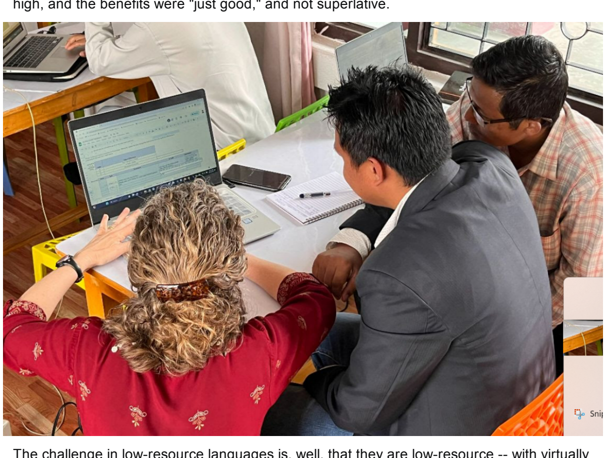
Hélène has completed a Maîtrise en Lettres Modernes Option classiques (Master's degree in Modern Literature Classics Option), the Diplôme d'études Approfondies (DEA) en Sciences du langage (DEA in Language Sciences), and the Doctorat en Traductologie (PhD in Translation Studies).

Her translation consultant training included taking the courses offered by SIL Francophone Africa and then being mentored by three different consultants. She particularly appreciated the enrichment offered by these diverse mentors as they were from different cultural backgrounds and with different personalities. She learned different consulting approaches including the variety of relationships of the advisor to the team. She was mentored on various books and various language groups. One mentor also included orality and using the Render software.

News and Updates

Trial of AI-Generated OT Drafts - *Jeff Webster*

A recent workshop in South Asia evaluated AI-generated drafts of the Old Testament in three languages. This was a first-in-the-world trial of artificial intelligence in "low-resource" languages, and it was exciting to be a part of it. Although it seems as if AI has come out of nowhere this year, colleagues from the SIL Language Technology team have been working toward this day for fifteen years. There have been proponents of different computer-assisted translation tools for many years, but the barriers to entry have generally been very high, and the benefits were "just good," and not superlative.



The challenge in low-resource languages is, well, that they are low-resource -- with virtually no literature. Systems like ChatGPT, which are taking the world by storm, have been trained on approximately 300 billion words of text. The languages in our trial were being specifically trained on just the New Testament (about 800,000 words, but building on the billions-of-words models, and also trained on over 200 languages). Would it work to train models on the New Testament (NT) and then auto-generate books in the Old Testament (OT)? An average NT takes 6-10 years, and the OT is 3 times as long as the NT. With New Testaments coming off the press at an unprecedented rate right now (7 this year and 6 next year), the stakes for AI's potential are huge.

We used Branchu (pseudonym) as the first test language. Branchu is super complex grammatically, with a single verb tense having over 50 unique forms, so my hopes were pretty low. But to my amazement, the initial AI-generated drafts were mostly natural and grammatically correct, sounding like really good Branchu! Wow, mind-blowing! Accuracy, however, was far from perfect, with frequent outlandish errors. The hope, though, wasn't for a perfect AI-generated first draft, but for a draft that was good enough that it could be polished by a translator to produce a revised draft more efficiently than traditional translation. The trial has just begun, but initial indications are that we can reduce the time required to produce a polished first draft. The other two languages in the workshop had similarly positive results. We will be continuing to test this out over the summer before a final evaluation this September.

Key Terms of the Old Testament - *Ten New Articles*

The Key Terms of the Old Testament (KTOT) team has just finished the 8th release, completing ten new articles for a total of 93. You can find the KTOT download file on the Paratext website. They are still working on integrating KTOT into the regular Paratext updates, so to update to the latest KTOT version, follow the instructions on this page. Here is the list of the ten new articles and three revised articles.

- God אֵל - *Manie van den Heever*
- Lord אָדוֹן - *Manie van den Heever*
- Bless ברך - *Prabhakar Atluri & Anne Kompaore*
- Soul נֶפֶשׁ - *Drew Maust*
- Reject/ Despise מאס - *Peter de Niet*
- Test נסה - *Meg Billingsley*
- Cosmos - *Janet McLarren*
- Betray בגד - *Jeffrey Feinberg, Ivan Pavlii, A. D. Riddle, Jubilee Shaver, Jonathan Van Neste*
- Wave Offering תְּנוּפָה - *Peter Schmidt*
- Subdue כבשׁ - *Michael Jemphrey*
- Scoffer לֵץ - *Colin Mills*
- Idols רוּמָה - *Paul McLarren*
- Charge/ Responsibility מִשְׁמֶרֶת - *JoAnna Hoyt*

(KTOT) is a tool for the Bible translation and consultant community, providing current research on some of the most important key terms of the Old Testament using minimal technical language. This tool is not a dictionary or lexicon, though it has some of those features and is formatted as a Source Language Dictionary in Paratext. KTOT provides extended discussions of the cultural background of these terms, some grammatical description, comparisons of similar and contrastive terms, descriptions of the history of the translation of the term, and translation suggestions.

SIL Eurasia Translation Development Event (TDE) - *Thomas Hemphill*

This past February 2023, 135 translation personnel from across Eurasia gathered for a seven day translation development event in Northern Cyprus. These people included 70 translation/exegetical advisors, 36 translation consultants and 8 CiTs, with the remainder having other roles.

The purpose of the event was to provide ongoing professional development and support to translation/ exegetical advisors and translation consultants, especially for those who work in isolation on the field or in their home countries.

Each day started with praise and worship in the different languages and musical styles from across Eurasia, followed by a Bible talk on 2 Timothy which had a focus on socio-rhetorical criticism, with suggestions for translation. After morning tea, for four of the days we had plenary sessions on various topics such as SE, linguistics, orality, Hebrew, Greek, localisation, and the role of the translation/ exegetical advisor and consultant. For the other days, participants presented papers and case studies.

After a long, two hour lunch, during which time many connections were made, we gathered again for workshops on exegetical checking, community/comprehension testing and consultant checking. We closed out each day with elective tracks. Participants could choose between exegesis, Living Hebrew, project management, OBS, OBT, Relevance Theory, SE, Discourse and the Hebrew Verbal System.

We had one day off in the middle for rest or enjoying the sights of Cyprus, such as Salamis where Paul visited in Acts 13. Based on anonymous feedback data, 73% found TDE very helpful, and a further 25% found it helpful, and 92% hope we run the event again.

We are thankful for our logistics coordinators who helped everything run smoothly, as well as the many presenters and other people who contributed to the event. Most of all we are thankful to our Lord who oversaw everything and who gave us life, salvation and the reason we do what we do. If you are interested in knowing more, or are interested in running a similar event for your group and would like some advice or help, please email Thomas, the lead organiser.

Proverbs Course - *Murray Salisbury*

JCBT announced another "*Text in Context: One Book at a Time*" course, this one focusing on Proverbs, taught by Murray Salisbury for three weeks (20 November to 08 December 2023). It will be offered as a hybrid course - taught in-person in Israel and also online. For further information click here, and then click on the button "Proverbs Course by M.Salisbury." You can also email the JCBT office.

NT2OT Hebrew Training - *Bob Carter*

The NT2OT (*New Testament to Old Testament*) program was started back in 2016 and was designed for NT-experienced consultants who wanted to gain competency in Hebrew and OT translation. The program is part-time, specifically focused on enabling working consultants to improve their Hebrew with just a one year investment of part-time study. The 8th year of study will start this October 2023. For further information, please email me, Bob Carter.

It consists of three parts: (1) ten months (October to July) of online immersive Hebrew learning, (2) a one-month intensive Hebrew course in Israel at JCBT, and (3) a follow-up year of online training in Hebrew translation issues.

Hebrew Semester Program - *JCBT*

Since 1995, JCBT (*Jerusalem Center for Bible Translators*) has been training mother-tongue translators, CiTs and consultants in *Biblical Hebrew* and in the *Historical Geography of the Land of the Bible*. They sometimes call it "*The Language and the Land*". The present course focuses on a high academic level for consultants and CiTs, and consists of two months (February and March 2024) online and three months (April, May, and June 2024) in Israel. Alternatives to this schedule are also being considered.

This semester program offers 120 hours of living Biblical Hebrew, Historical Geography "Land of the Bible", Advanced Reading of Hebrew Texts, Semantics, Discourse Analysis, and Hebrew Poetry. All of these courses focus on translation and all of them are accredited through the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The present schedule is February through June 2024. Click here to find out more about the semester program.

Biblical Hebrew as a Living Language - *Asia/Pacific Time Slot*

Jerusalem Seminary (JS) is opening a pilot online Hebrew course at a time that should be more appropriate for those living in the Asia/ Pacific area. Click the link here to go to the course catalog for times and more information. Courses are available at discounted "early bird" prices until September 1st. JS trains Israelis from the local body in Israel in Biblical Hebrew and communicative teaching methods so they can use their gift of fluent Hebrew to help you read fluently, and even speak, sing and pray in Biblical Hebrew. The course strives not to mix Modern Hebrew in with our Biblical Hebrew. Contact Brittany Löwenstein for further information.

Coming Events

- 2023 - 05-08 July. Working Symposium on Quality in Translation. International Linguistics Center, Dallas, Texas.
- 2023 - 24 July - 04 August. Francophone Africa Translation Consultant Development Workshop (DTRAD23). Translation Coordinator. Registration is now open for this hybrid event, that will be held in French.
- 2023 - 13-17 October. Bible Translation Conference, Dallas, Texas. Register now.
- 2023 - 18 October. Macro Analysis of Hebrew Poetic & Prophetic Discourse Event, DIU, Dallas, TX (with virtual option) Click here to register.
- 2024 - 27-30 May. EMDC. Chiangmai, Thailand
- 2024 - 10 June - 19 July. TCDW (Translation Consultant Development Workshop). Hybrid. Application deadline is 31 December 2023. Space is limited. Preference will be given to the best qualified applicants who apply before the deadline. To request an application or more information, please email Angeline Foo.

Useful Links

- Bible Translation Consultant Competencies
- Competency Manager (CBC) and Consultant Competencies Resources Site
- Bible Translation 2023 Conference - 13-17 October 2023
- Journal of Translation
- SIL Senior Translation Consultants
- Email the SIL International Translation Office
- International Translation Services ILS Google page
- Join/visit the SIL Translation Resources Google Group
- Visit the public SIL.org/Translation site
- Find Translation Resources (both free download and for purchase) SIL.org/Resources/Publications
- Bamboo Project website
- Mentoring Matters website - Mentor Training Courses
- Consultant Development and Management Team
- Progress.Bible Information
- Memoriam website

SIL Translation Services

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- Greg Dekker - *ITS Director*
- Dick Kroneman - *International Coordinator for Translation Research and Practice*
- Paul O'Rear - *International Coordinator for Translation Resources*
- Phil King - *International Coordinator for Translation Training and Development*
- Nathan Payne - *International Coordinator for Oral Translation Services*
- Viji Mathew - *Director, Global Consultant Pool*
- Brian Migliazza - *ITS Operations and Project Management*

Area Translation Coordinators

- Angie Foo - *Asia*
- Greg Carlson - *Pacific*
- Drew Maust - *Francophone Africa*
- Jonathan van den Broek - *AngloLusophone Africa*
- Thomas Hemphill & Katja Mueller - *Eurasia*
- Rick Floyd & Dwight Shaver - *Americas*
- Yuki Yamada - *Global Sign Languages Team (GSLT)*

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You are receiving this email because of your interest in translation updates.

This newsletter is produced by SIL International Translation Services.
Editors are Tuula O'Rear and Brian Migliazza.
It contains items of interest for translation personnel within SIL and related organizations.
It includes notices of upcoming conferences and workshops, announcements of recent dissertations and journal articles, and pointers to useful information related to translation.

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