ITS NEWS

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 Bible translation and for the church to nurture and engage with Scripture.

We value: Intercontextualness, Capacity Building, Diversity, Innovation,

March 2024

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from Greg Delaney, ITS Director

Thanks to Phil King for writing another fine ITS leadership team letter about a topic that has undoubtedly received a lot of reflection from many of you as well. This month's ITS Newsletter article is presented by Phil King who nicely synthesizes many of our thoughts and has put to complete thought the ideas.

What do we mean by 'church'?

- Phil King, ITS Training & Development

At the moment, I frequently find myself in conversations about what it means to be 'church'. I suspect that one of the key priorities of SIL's Global Plan is connected to the increasing emphasis on the role of the church in translation. We have moved from a more Bible-first, discussion-based ('SIL Connects') around SIL's Global Plan which emphasizes the importance of the church in a different way. Put another, I'm part of a group that meets weekly to talk about the church. Our conversations are part of the Community-based Bible Translation, with a vision to see the church engaging with Scripture in their heart language and in a more transformational and expansive - for what we mean by 'church' is frequently being centre-stage in our conversations.

As I talk with others about these initiatives, there are a variety of common responses about the church. Some are excited about the potential, but others are more cautious, fearful or there is not much in the area where I work. These responses reflect the variety of references we make when we hear words like 'church', 'churches' or 'the church'. We all have our own mental pictures of what the church is. Sometimes, we may not even be aware that we have been using terms connected to the church in these different ways. Sometimes, we may be aware that we are using the term in a more universal (wide) sense of believers in a particular area, or to an organisation of the people of God with a particular purpose. Sometimes we are referring to a particular denomination or local church.

Put into a diagram, it might look like this:

For me, it helps to try and work out what pictures of 'church' people are working with if I really want to understand what they are advocating. The work in the 'Translating with the Church' course has helped me to see that there are different models of church in the Bible. I've found this to be helpful in terms of the global church (including all traditions that are faithful expressions of the church) and the local church (in all its forms). Unfortunately, the dominant expression of Bible translation being introduced by other national or global agencies, in this reference to the church, has been to the global church. Rather than working with the existing local church, they have created a parallel body of people. In the SIL Global Plan, there is a recognition that this has been unhelpful and that we need to work with the local church. Unfortunately, the church has traditionally had strong relationships with church leaders at the denominational level, but it remains to grow our connections at national and grass-roots levels.

From a semantic point of view, I think the reality of language use means that it is futile to try and fix the meaning of 'church' to one thing. Rather, we need to be aware of the need to recognise that words like 'church' are with reference to many things. Sometimes, we may need to be more specific in our use of the word 'church' in order to avoid confusion and create significant misunderstandings and misconceptions - what people use these words as they talk to each other.

Conversations with Greg are also challenging me to think about the 'church' in different ways. Recently, he has been talking about the church as a movement rather than a building. And more recently, he has been talking about the church as a family. Both of these ideas have also frustrated it who we are. Individuals are unsatisfactory, in the mission of God? This has challenged me to think about the church as a family. Is this a helpful metaphor? Is it helpful to emphasise formation of God's people as a family? Does it emphasise the institutional organisations of the church, or inaccurately mislead formations of God's people into thinking of organisations?

So what picture comes to mind when you think of Bible translation and the church? Or do you find yourself saying, 'churches' in order to help remove any ambiguity? When conversations about the church come up, what do you do to help clarify what the church is? Let's hear your responses and we can help each other to think more clearly about translation!

Interviews with Translation Consultants

We asked two experienced Translation Consultants, Minie Mathew and Kathy Tabet, to share their thoughts concerning their work and philosophy of training.

Minie Mathew - *South Asia*

How did you get interested in Bible translation?
I heard about Bible translation during my college/ seminary days. I was interested in it as I was from a linguistic course (Indian Institute of Cross Cultural Communication) where I was taught about the different minority languages, cultures, the need for literature and media conferences. I began to consider the possibility of serving in my native for whom there is no written language.

Hearing the Bible in my own language allowed me to grow spiritually. But what about those who don't yet have it? They would most likely have the gospel shared with them in the World to not available in their own tongue. how can they grow spiritually? These thoughts sparked my interest in Bible translation. I then joined Wycliffe India and studied at CTC. I had started Daniel has further increased my dedication to the translation of God's Word.

What gets you excited when you work with others in Bible translation? Learning from others is exciting. Each person has their own strengths and I enjoy learning from them. Sometimes as personality. While working with them, I usually have knowledge on them in the Through different events. Furthermore, working with others contributes to a deeper relationship with them. I enjoy working with others as we work towards the common purpose.

What is your consulting philosophy? Each translation project and community is different. I see myself in the role of a facilitator to guide the team to do a quality translation. I try to be flexible and adapt to the needs of the team. I also try to be aware of the cultural and specific ethos working with the team, rather than making them feel that I am an expert. I have had the opportunity to work with teams who have been working on the project for years. I consult based on that. If they don't have one, I would discuss with them the background of the project, the vision, the goals and the translation principles. I also like to be a listener. Having said so, I'll strongly feel that the team's problem can still be solved by applying with the intended meaning of the text or their translation brief. I encourage them to do more research, to find out more and to discuss with the community to find a solution.

What translation resources do you really value? It depends on the books that we work on. I value the resources available mostly in Paratext and Logos. I also prefer BibleWorks and Accordance where there isn't much support for Paratext or Logos.

How do you share your translation discoveries with others? I share my things like Training Workshops, Consultant checking sessions and Discovery of Practice sessions.

Can you share about a time when you realized you were wrong and what you learned from it? I have had many instances where I was wrong and learned from it. I'll share one of my colleagues went on email seeking help on checking the Book of Ruth. I had done the Book of Ruth in my mother tongue and I was confident that I could help him.

(In little the the Ammonite king's crown on their idol. Molech's crown that David took?) (Is Was it one precious jewel on the crown or about Jewels?) (Like this it the precious stone that David took and put in his crown?)

While doing the study on the verses, I realized that I overlooked the textual variant while translating. I had translated the verse according to the Masoretic Text. I then did my research and shared my findings and suggested to keep a footnote, as another UBC version has followed the Masoretic Text. I learned from this experience that I need to be careful in my translation especially when there are textual variants, different possible interpretations - especially in literary cases. Also, that I should get back to the team with the findings and discuss with them.

What are your top five resources serving as a career path in Bible translation? I understand that many years of learning, teamwork and hard work are involved in the career. Results may not be seen immediately. So be encouraged, humble and patient.

Share something that you learned from a mentor or from a mentee. A mentor is always someone who is willing to share his/her knowledge, experience, time and energy with a less knowledge, prep, and stand with you. Most of the things that I have learned in Bible Translation from my mentors and continue to do so, be a still approach them for my learning and encouragement. Mentors are also flexible, willing to encourage and help their mentees to preserve without giving up.

What would you say to young/aspiring translators? First, keep in mind that God has called you to this ministry. Be encouraged and trust in Him. Be willing to learn. Be willing to be a willing. Listening is involvement in Bible translation as a Bible. Translation is a process and a project in India, then moved to the role of Translation Advisor/ Facilitator for the same 22 years. Now I am back in India, serving as a Translation Consultant.

So, if you are determined, willing to learn and perseverance, there is a promise that I'm confident that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1:6).

Kathy Tabet - *Asia*

How did you get interested in Bible translation?
I am the daughter of a Bible translator so Bible translation has surrounded me my whole life. I remember as a child, I would sit on my dad's lap as he never considered going into the field, though I did have a strong sense that God was leading me to do so. Because I loved sports and excelled a lot in them, I considered going into the field of physical education and as a coach but this was in vain. However, when I had to choose a language to study at university, I chose Hebrew, as I felt that already had three years of it in high school. I had a wonderful professor who was a Messianic Jew, Victor Golub, and I absolutely loved it. So I set in motion the things that led to my studying and surrounding me, lectures, commentaries, etc., and I was amazed at how much I enjoyed it. I loved the stories, living translation. Perhaps I could do that after all!

I ended up going to Linguistic training in Norman, OK between my junior and senior year of college and got one semester of my MA training out of the way. I also joined SIL that year. I then went to Dallas for my senior year of college. I met my husband, Wendy, and right after graduating, I married him and we went to Papua New Guinea for training. We then went to Indonesia for 10 years where I worked as a translation consultant, facilitator on a NT and much of the OT. Several others in translation, and been both a Bible translator and a coach for Bible translators. Currently, I live in Thailand and work in Asia. I have a two daughters in Australia, who are married and have children, and live in Indonesia, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Thailand.

What gets you excited when you work with others in Bible translation? Seeing God's Word come to life in the hearts of people who have never had it in their own language for the first time. It is amazing when people start sharing what God is teaching them through the newly translated Scriptures. It is also exciting when translators start understanding how translation is struggling with as in need of encouragement about.

What is your consulting philosophy? I guess I would say, I am not really interested in helping people produce translations in their language that are just as hard for them to understand as the national language that they already have. In these cases, they seem to be more for the translators themselves than for the people they are intended for. Translations should be clear, natural, and accurate. I am also very interested in helping people produce translations that are faithful to the text, but not slavishly literal