Subject April 2025 Translation News

Preheader SIL Translation Services (ITS)

SIL Translation Services (STS) 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.

April 2025

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"I hope that…"

- Greg Dekker - *International Translation Services Director*

I have recently shared that I am making a planned transition out of SIL International Translation Services after five years of service with a great team. Phil King will be following me as Director of SIL Translation Services. Phil comes with a depth of experience, innovative ideas, and ideas for further delivering services and resources to SIL Areas and SIL Community Organizations (SCOs) and partners. See the introduction of Phil below.

It has been a privilege to serve with an amazing team in SIL Translation Services: Phil King, Angie Foo, Paul O'Rear and Nick Peterson, Viji Mathew, Brian Migliazza, and Kris Toler, and prior to this last year, Dick Kroneman and Nathan Payne. Serving with this team has been a source of joy, challenge, encouragement, and growth for me. I have benefitted as well from really amazing interactions with a great team of Area Translation Coordinators, as well as translation partners, too. Thank you to each of you for the collaborative work and planned initiatives that you are doing, and that we have accomplished together. And I'll be interacting with you more, I'm sure.

In the rest of this article, I want to share a "hope list" for SIL Translation Services and for Translation within the Community of Bible Translation (BT). Please keep in mind that these do not necessarily represent an SIL position; I'm speaking personally here. Some of these will be specific to SIL, others will apply to our broader Bible Translation Community. Many of these "hopes" are already taking shape or happening, and that encourages me greatly! Others have a ways to go. These are not listed in any order of priority. Read on…

I hope that:

- We could continue to- and increasingly view the BT process as a process of discipleship and transformation in the hearts and minds of all who contribute to the process in the community, and that production would take a backseat to these priorities. E.g., How might we better utilize community checking to encourage engagement with Scripture?
- “Unity” could increasingly be thought of as an identity we share as followers of Jesus, and that the work and characteristics that distinguish us would serve to deepen that identity and strengthen the work we do together for the Lord in the service of others.
- Our SIL focus in Program Design and development would carefully consider ways in which we can increasingly contribute holistically to community needs. My hope is that we can do our part with the tools God has given us to contribute to the vision we have for flourishing communities, while at the same time recognizing that spiritual heart change and transformation is the start of that flourishing journey. And I hope that emphasis on holism would permeate the whole translation landscape.
- Organizationally we can be better aligned in our services and best practices, not just so these could be better offered in a “downward” trajectory, so we could experience continuity of practice and service offerings in all the diverse places we work (which we do pretty well already), but so that the practices and lessons learned at the levels of community engagement could be better offered in an “upward” trajectory and shared and thus influence our ways of working at organizational leadership levels. And I’m really pleased at the progress we’re making on this already and appreciate the value shown by our leaders on the advice, opinions, and suggestions coming from staff at all levels of the organization.
- We can better build on the needs and desires of the community and any local expression of the Church of which we are all a part, and that the program established would be founded on the assets available locally, with sustainability in view.
- We could refrain from generalizing to the whole BT community a practice that works well in one place but may not apply so well (or at all) in others. Our contexts are so diverse that we need to take great care that our enthusiasm for a success in one place is not proliferated as a “best practice” everywhere.
- We can continue to balance well our value of fidelity in translating accurately the meaning and emotion of the original, with our value of serving well the quality assurance process of local communities and assisting them as necessary in building that capacity, recognizing their strong desire for accuracy and fidelity in the translation. And I hope that we can continue to strive together enthusiastically for that accuracy and fidelity with a view to reproducing the original in a form and language that serves communities well.
- The need for Scripture Engagement and Scripture Use would grow as quickly as- and carry the same import with resource partners- as the desire and need for AI tools to hasten the translation process. The faster production goes, the faster will be the need to develop new tools to apply Scriptures and put them into use in communities. I’m also so glad for the added community engagement that OBT is providing!
- Affecting transformation would take precedence over any other impact we hope for, and that planning done between the Technical, Resource, and Impact partners would *rigorously* explore the best way(s) to accomplish that, putting everything else secondary to that.
- Translation staff in local communities could be more consistently developed into Translation Consultants; that the funds provided for their development as translators/Translation Advisors could follow them as appropriate in their professional development as consultants to assist other language communities.
- Great care will be taken to communicate well our plans in any given location to others in the BT community so that real partnership will happen, respecting the efforts of one another and the groundwork that has been laid by each one to affect transformative programs.
- Hearing from the local community and local church about their desires and priorities for BT will take real, tangible precedence over any timetable established for completing a BT project, or parts of a BT project. This may require greater investment from the local community in developing a sustainable resourcing model for the BT project.
- We in SIL can humbly advocate for project engagements, through participatory methods with communities and gracious interactions with partners, in order to represent well the activities which can enhance project outcomes. These may include language assessment (which goes beyond assessment of BT need), linguistic analysis and orthography development, literacy survey and multilingual education efforts, community development services, and similar.
- We would be so serious about both Scripture Engagement and uplifting communities that we would prioritize literacy and multilingual education so that communities can read the Word and also read it in other languages thus broadening their ability to access discipleship materials and other learning materials. And I hope that our prioritization of literacy and multilingual education would encourage funders to get behind this need and determine to fund Lit. and Educ. in every BT program.

What do you hope for? Write to me at greg_dekker@sil.org and let me know.

Introducing Phil King

Greg Dekker will be handing over the role of *Director of International Translation Services* to **Phil King** on 10 May 2025. Greg has served in this role since 2020 and will be taking on a new role under the new Executive Director’s Team after ICON 2025. In this new role, Greg will be overseeing several ILS domains and will be reporting to Christy Liner, Associate Executive Director, Central Services.

Phil began his SIL journey in 2000, alongside the Award Bing community on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea. Over the next fifteen years he set up and grew the Pacific Institute of Languages, Arts and Translation, leading as Academic Dean and teaching Papua New Guinean translators and consultants in biblical studies, Hebrew, Greek and 'discover your language' courses. Since 2015, Phil has (at different times) led the UK's SIL-validated training programme, worked with the SIL localisation team, coordinated training and development for SIL translation services, and supported the British Sign Language translation project. He is also a member of the Quality Assurance branch of the ETEN Innovation Lab. Phil has a PhD exploring conceptual metaphors in Biblical Hebrew, and is a Senior Linguistics Consultant. His passion is to see communities across the world equipped to engage more deeply with God's word. Phil will continue serving as International Coordinator for Translation Training and Development until the transition to Director of Translation Services in May.

OBT Helps Website

- Kris Toler

Oral Translation Services is thrilled to introduce obthelps.org, a new website that houses all oral exegetical tools from the Spoken English Bible. This website fills a gap in available materials for OBT teams and offers three types of content: the SEB's translation, commentary on translation issues, and "key concept stories." These stories explain the Bible's most important word groups and concepts, making complex relational terms like *hesed* and *charis* more accessible and memorable. Currently, resources are available for *Ruth*, *Jonah*, several *Psalms*, and the beginning of *Luke*. By year-end, all of *Daniel* and the rest of *Luke* will be added, along with several dozen more key concept stories

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Translation Resources News

- Paul O'Rear

As I'm sure you all know, Translator's Workplace (TW) is our flagship tool for deploying translation resources of many kinds. TW is a pretty critical part of what our larger Translation Resources team produces and manages. In addition to all of the translation guidance material that our own SIL Translation Resources team develops – which is quite a lot! – we also manage a customized library of content that includes biblical commentaries, many Bible translations in a variety of languages, biblical language training materials, Bible atlases, Bible dictionaries and encyclopedias...

Part of my job as *International Coordinator for Translation Resources* is to advocate for the needs of Bible translators, and where possible, to work with publishers to obtain permissions to have access to their content. Through the generosity of many top tier publishers, Bible translators are able to access the highest quality and most recent scholarship to assist in the Bible translation and exegesis processes through the resources that TW provides.

TW is built on the Logos Bible software platform which enables us to access this content in an integrated way — kind of like a customized biblical library where you can search and access everything electronically. Because these publishers already produce their content for use in Logos, it is primarily their permission to include it in TW that is the biggest hurdle.

Through the kind assistance of a former Logos employee, Ben Amundgaard, now working for BiblioNexus (a Bible translation partner agency), I was able to connect to several key contacts among these publishers over the last several months. These publishers have now contributed several thousands of dollars' worth of new resources to TW which will aid translator teams worldwide quite significantly—all effectively free of charge.

In addition to Zondervan, and more recently, IVP Academic, we've been able to add resources from additional publishers, such as Baker Publishing Group, Broadman & Holman (B&H), and SPCK (IVP UK). We also have had good relations with Eerdmans over the years, which have now been rekindled, and we will see additional new content from them soon.

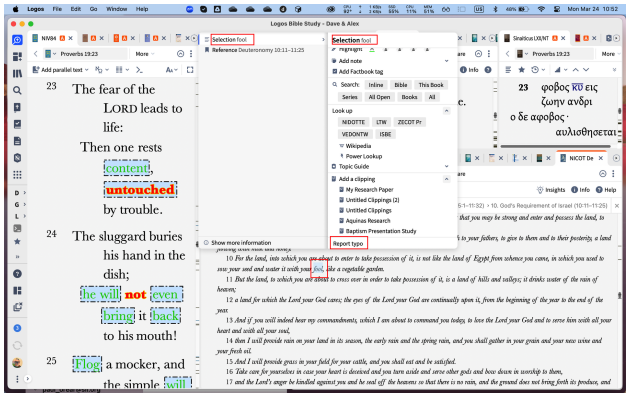
Some other exciting new initiatives are under way as well in the TW space in coordination with Logos and other partner organizations. We will have a pilot program exploring the possible addition of the new Auto-translate feature that Logos offers their Max subscription customers. Would you give thanks to God with us for these new publisher contacts, their generosity, and their resources, and join us in praying for these new initiatives?

Translator's Workplace

TW Typos Tip - you may wonder how to report typos for content in TW. I'm not sure how much Logos tracks these, but you can submit a typo report in Logos itself.

(1) Select the word
(2) Right-click for the context menu
(3) Scroll all the way down on the right side of the menu and select Report Typo

It should look like this:



What are the SIL Global Translation Priorities?

- Phil King - *Translation Training & Development*

Over the past month, our translation services team has been thinking about the outcomes we want to work towards over the next few years. These are our ideas at this stage:

(1) **Translation Community**: The Area Coordinators and the International Translation Services (ITS) are functioning well as a team that exhibits mutual trust and support, understands each other's needs and activities and co-owns decision-making and planning

(2) **Best practices:** ITS is facilitating discussions with Area Coordinators and the broader SIL translation community to build consensus around best practices, curating the outputs and (where appropriate or requested) collaboratively monitoring alignment, in order to support local SIL Community Organisations (SCO) in their decision making.

(3) **SIL and the Church**: ITS is encouraging and monitoring conversations about the role of the local church in translation, and is developing services (with Area Translation Coordinators and others) in ways that respond to expressed needs from the local church.

(4) **Multimodality**: Within SIL, multimodality is integrated into project planning, training at translator and consultant level, resource development, and professional development.

(5) **Partnership and Collaboration**: ITS has strong mutual inter-organisational relationships and a variety of joint efforts with key partners.

(6) **Localised resources**: Translation resources, best practices and other materials are available in an increasing number of major world languages.

(7) **Well-nourished**: ITS is contributing to a well-nourished SIL by continuing, expanding, and increasing our exploration into alternative revenue streams, and by giving continued attention to Scripture reflection and prayer.

(8) **Consulting, Training and Mentoring:** ITS is providing additional capacity to strengthen local contexts with regard to consulting, training and mentoring.

Please let us know your input at this stage. Is there something else we should be doing that would serve you well, or that you think should be on our agenda? Do you have specific ideas connected to any of these items that you would like to see us focusing on? Please email phil_king@sil.org with any feedback you would like to give.

New Translation Consultants

Bethann Carlson & Greg Carlson & Sam Pflederer

Bethann Carlson - ***Pacific***

Congratulations to Bethann Carlson on completing all the requirements for certification as a Translation Consultant. David Troolin, on behalf of the *SIL Pacific Area Consultant Technical Evaluation Committee*, announced that she has met the qualifications.

Bethann holds an MA in Applied Linguistics from the University of Texas at Arlington, a graduate certificate in Applied Linguistics as Community Based Literacy from University of North Dakota and a graduate certificate from Payap University in MultiLingual Education. Bethann has served as a translation advisor for New Testaments in two language communities of Vanuatu (North Tanna and Whitesands languages), and has been heavily involved in Scripture Engagement and Literacy as well. She worked as an advisor to the Curriculum Development Unit of Vanuatu's Ministry of Education and Training for various literacy projects in 25 languages, and served as SIL Vanuatu's Literacy Coordinator for six years.

She currently serves as the Pacific Area Scripture Engagement Coordinator. She also serves in a Diaspora Project with the Global Diaspora Services. Bethann loves mentoring teams in the translation process. She also loves seeing translations used and impacting individuals and churches, as she passionately promotes Scripture Engagement and Literacy in projects she serves. She is looking forward to engaging all her skills as she does translation consulting.

Greg Carlson - ***Pacific***

Congratulations to Greg Carlson (SIL Pacific Area) on completing all the requirements for certification as a Translation Consultant based on the CBC competencies and mentored checks. James Ashley was his supervising mentor. David Troolin, on behalf of the *Pacific Area Consultant Technical Evaluation Committee*, made the announcement.

Greg received an MDiv from Fuller Seminary and an MA in Linguistics from the University of Texas, Arlington (UTA). He and his wife Bethann were Translation Advisors for two New Testaments projects in Vanuatu. Then he served as the SIL Vanuatu director. He is currently the SIL Pacific Area Translation Coordinator and a project coordinator for Global Diaspora Services.

Certificate of Achievement

awarded to

Greg Carlson

upon completion of all requirements for

Translation Consultant

according to the standards of SIL International

14 February 2025

Language Services Director Pacific Area

Acting Translation Coordinator Pacific Area

SIL

Sam Pflederer - *Africa*

Congratulations to Sam Pflederer working with SIL Southern Africa Group (SOA) on completing all the requirements for certification as a Translation Consultant. Drew Maust (Chairman) announced that the SIL Africa Area Accreditation Committee for translation consultants has examined his dossier and they are pleased to say that the committee has formally recognized him as a Translation Consultant. Sam's experience, expertise, and wide-ranging competence, will by God's grace be a great asset to the work of Bible translation in Africa and beyond for years to come. Sam completed the online TCDW course through SIL Asia Area in 2022 and Benjie Leach was his supervising mentor.

Sam and his wife began Portuguese study in 2012 and then have been living among the Makua-Meetto people in northern Mozambique since 2015. After an initial period of intensive language and culture learning, he joined the New Testament translation team in early 2017 providing exegetical and consistency checks of two-thirds of the New Testament text. The Meetto New Testament was dedicated in 2021. Since then he has been deeply involved in Scripture distribution and engagement initiatives among the Makua-Meetto and facilitating translation of the Psalms through the Meetto *Psalms That Sing* pilot program, while also pursuing consultant training through supervised checking with neighboring teams.

He completed mentored checking with teams in Nampula, Mozambique, under the supervision of three different consultants. In addition he has done remote checking with several teams in Asia under two consultants as part of the TCDW training. He has also guided a team through the entire oral translation / transcription process from drafting to exegetical checking under the supervision of two different consultants over various workshops. Sam has a BA (2008) in History and Philosophy from Wheaton College (Illinois) and an MA (2011) in Applied Linguistics (Bible translation concentration) from GIAL/DIU (Texas).

Certificate of Accreditation

SIL

This certificate attests that

SAMUEL B. PFLEDERER

has successfully completed the requirements to become a

Consultant in Bible Translation

as defined by SIL International.

As an accredited consultant, the above-named bearer is an expert authorized to guide, train, review, and approve Bible translation work. This certificate, issued on 24 March 2025, is subject to periodic review and renewal by SIL.

Gordon Hughes
Director of Language Services
SIL Anglo-Lusophone Africa

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Jonathan van der Merwe
Translation Network Team Leader
SIL Anglo-Lusophone Africa

Language for a Better Life

Interviews with Translation Consultants

We asked experienced Translation Consultants, Chuck Tessaro and Marlon Winedt, to share their thoughts concerning their work and philosophy of ministry. Experienced consultants have been a key organizational resource over the years, equipping and encouraging others to academic and professional excellence while providing much needed leadership and service to many Bible translation organizations.

Chuck Tessaro - *Africa*

We asked Chuck Tessaro some questions about his life and ministry philosophy.

How did you get interested in Bible translation? Observing faithful parents, pastors, Sunday School teachers, and others interacting with God's word for the benefit of others (including me!) encouraged me to want others to have a similar opportunity to interact with God's word. Having a chance to learn Biblical languages in college strengthened that idea.

What gets you excited when you work with others in Bible translation? I love the opportunity to work together on this great task. One thing I find exciting is when a group of us comes to an interpretation or application of the scriptures which is new to us. Another thing I find exciting is the liveliness of translation teams. At times a team will ask me to show them how to do something; often the team will come back later and show me a better way to do it—that gives me hope for the future, that the work will continue, led by people sharper than I am.

What is your consulting philosophy? When working with a translation team, I feel that I am surrounded by a group of experts in their language, culture, and other things; we are coming together to help God's word come alive. And although I cannot remember the source, I was influenced by an article some year ago which argued that a good role for a consultant is to be a spare tire, helping the team when needed to achieve their goals.

What translation resources do you really value? I am very grateful for all of the valuable resources in Paratext and TW Logos.

How do you continue to grow as a consultant? By bumping into interesting consultants and interesting articles.

Can you share about a time when you realized you were wrong and what you learned from it? While working with a team, a certain verse looked fine to me, and so I said, "That's okay." A member of the team became excited and said, "What do you mean? How can that be okay? That is not okay!" That experience helps me to remember that the entire team is checking and working to make the best translation possible.

What are your top tips for someone starting on a career path in Bible translation? Be patient and be fond of learning things like linguistics, anthropology, Biblical languages, and other things.

Share something that you learned from a mentor or from a mentee? While the list is long, mentees from the host cultures often point out cultural items that are easy for me to miss.

What do you see as the place of the church in Bible translation? It seems that people who regularly gather around the Word of God would like others to have the same privilege. And while we have many things to do, considering working with the church as a low priority may not be helpful.

What would you say to young/aspiring translators? You are in a good situation to learn. Be flexible as you do so, and continue to look to God for strength and guidance.

Marlon Winedt - *Americas*

We asked Marlon Winedt some questions about his life and ministry philosophy.

How did you get interested in Bible translation? I finished my studies in the Netherlands and got engaged to be married. I had received a position to pursue my PhD in Christian philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam and would also be an assistant in the department. However, when I went home to Curaçao for vacation, a pastor friend told me that the Bible was being translated into my mother tongue, Papiamentu. I felt a strong calling to get involved in that project.

When I returned to the Netherlands, I told my fiancée about this opportunity, and we agreed to change our plans. For a year, I took courses in Bible translation at the university and was also allowed to sit in on the review committee for the revision of the Dutch Good News Bible (Grootnieuws Bijbel). After that year, on October 30, we got married, and two weeks later, we moved to Curaçao. While it was a homecoming for me, for my wife—who is Dutch—it was her first time on the island.

What gets you excited when you work with others in Bible translation? I get excited about seeing the Word of God touch the lives of people and communities in a way that makes these communities visible to the world. To me, Bible translation is not only spiritual—though that is the most important aspect—but also a matter of social justice, which is itself spiritual in a different way.

What is your consulting philosophy? A consultant is part of the team and not the owner of the translation project. The consultant serves as a facilitator, mentor, and encourager—almost like a "paraclete" figure. The goal is to help the team grow in their work while respecting their ownership of the translation process and their cultural perspectives. A consultant is a helper, but also a learner. It is a two-way street.

What translation resources do you really value? I value Paratext—it is the greatest tool ever. I have been in Bible translation for 35 years, first as a translator and later as a consultant, and I have seen Paratext grow in its scope and possibilities.

I also highly appreciate SLTT (Sign Language Translation Tool) in our work with the Deaf community in Sign Language translation. The handbooks and translation notes provided to teams are invaluable because they focus on key translation issues.

Additionally, I value ongoing interaction with other consultants and learning from others through journals like *Notes on Translation* and *The Bible Translator*, as well as discussions in the Bible Translation Google Group.

How do you share your translation discoveries with others? I share my insights through various channels, including:

- Bible Translation (BT) networks
- Translation conferences
- Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) meetings
- Personal correspondence
- Articles in journals and books
- Lectures and presentations to churches, particularly in the Americas
- Teaching and mentoring of translation teams and consultants

Can you share about a time when you realized you were wrong and what you learned from it? I often find that the translation team is right about their own processes, and it is crucial to give them time. I have learned that the pursuit of uniformity in style and key terms is not always ideal. The Bible itself contains different styles, and different authors have distinct focuses and emphases.

More flexibility is needed in allowing translation teams to follow their intuition about their language. I have found that some communities do not always prefer a dynamic-equivalent translation, as poetic elements can be lost in more idiomatic renderings.

Of course, this realization came years ago. Today, there is more awareness of these aspects in translation work.

What are your top tips for someone starting on a career path in Bible translation?

- Give attention to both the source language and the target language—including cultural issues and modes of reception.
- Think multimodally—don't let any one translation approach dominate.
- Listen, listen, listen to the community. Each community has its own preferences.
- Do not position yourself as the ultimate authority on the text. You are part of a team, and the community ultimately has the final say.
- Decisions should be taken in agreement with and in consultation with the translation team.
- Linguistics is important—but not enough. Cultural and theological awareness is also essential.

Share something that you learned from a mentor or from a mentee. From my mentors, I have learned to be flexible, to pay attention to the human side of things, and to be people-oriented rather than purely process- or goal-oriented—while maintaining balance.

From a mentee, I have learned that Bible translation is complex and that experienced translators often take many things for granted. It is important to articulate our reasoning and to listen to the new generation of translators.

What do you see as the place of the church in Bible translation? Churches are the primary stakeholders in Bible translation. Ideally, they should be leading translation efforts. However, Bible translation is a complex task that requires specialized training.

The church must be at the center of decision-making, but pastors and those called to translation ministry need proper training in this area. We owe it to the Word of God and to the people groups we serve to ensure high-quality translations—while making sure the local church is not excluded from the process.

What would you say to young/aspiring translators?

- Study your own language deeply. Even as a native speaker, you do not fully know its richness until you dig deeper.
- Translation is not just about finding key term correspondences. It is both a science and an art—it requires creativity.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to use your God-given talent.
- Remember, you are part of a community. Don't become just a bureaucratic translator.
- Let your language sing, dance, exhort, and speak to the hearts of your people.

Any other comments? We are living in exciting and challenging times. Bible translation has always been about Scripture engagement, and it is important to bring together the different elements of the Bible Life Cycle—from translation to publication, from literacy to church engagement—so that God's Word can continually become incarnate in every generation.

Bible translation today involves technology, technical research, culture, language, multiple platforms and modes of communication, and deep cooperation on many levels. Ultimately, it is about transformation.

There is a great need for:

- First-time translations
- Sign Language translations
- Oral Bible Translations (OBT)
- Study materials in various languages
- Our work is not just about words on a page—it is about making the Word of God fully accessible and alive for every people group on earth.

News

Brazil Bible Translation Symposium Report

- Kelly Smith

Kelly Smith (Regional Director of SIL Brazil) attended the inaugural *Simpósio de Tradução Bíblica* (Bible Translation Symposium), held 17-21 March 2025 at the Villa Santa Mônica Convention Center in Guarulhos, São Paulo, Brazil.

There were some 160 participants, including academics, translators, facilitators, consultants and leaders (both hearing and deaf) who joined together to learn and discuss how to increase cooperation for the advancement of translation in the varied contexts in which God called them to serve. This diverse group of people from the Brazil Bible Translation (BT) movement represented 15 organizations, mission agencies, and denominations and 80 languages.

The catalyst for this event was the last SIL/UBS BT Conference held in Dallas. A contingent of Brazilian's from organizations involved in Brazil's BT movement attended the conference, many for the first time thanks to generous sponsorship from Seed Company. At the closing banquet, they sat together and brainstormed the idea of bringing a similar conference to Brazil. With vigorous collaboration from many in the Brazil BT Alliance, a little more than a year later, the contextualized *Simpósio* became a reality!

Some highlights of the gathering were worshiping in Portuguese; thought-provoking daily devotionals, plenary sessions covering relevant themes such as Translation Theories (Dr. George Payton - *DIU*), Multimodality, Translation into Sign Languages (Martha Gately - *GSLT*), Translation Consulting (Dr. Bryan Harmelink - *WGA*); and evening study groups to discuss each daily topic. Each meal hour provided ample opportunities to begin new relationships and deepen existing ones.

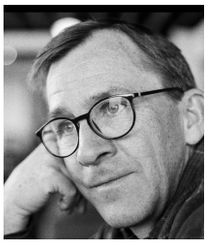
Each participant also received a Portuguese copy of the 4th edition of Katy Barnwell's *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course in Translation Principles* and a beautiful, blank Bible (representing languages without Scripture), as a gift from the SBB (Brazilian Bible Society), a crucial partner in the BT movement.

At the closing, during the open mic feedback session, one participant said that he was glad our name tags only had our personal but not our organization's name on them - as this promoted unity. I had noticed that same thing earlier and after he said that, most in the auditorium were nodding their heads in hearty agreement. By God's grace, the Bible translation movement is growing stronger in Brazil. We do need each other, regardless of our affiliation, and when we work together, as messy as it can be, God will bless it and I believe this was one event that demonstrated that truth in many visible, beautiful ways. This first Symposium was considered a success and plans are in place to repeat it every two years.

In this newsletter we regularly feature updates on AI and Translation.
Please let us know about your experiences using AI in Bible translation - we'd love to include your story in a future newsletter! What have you learned so far? What benefits or concerns have you identified? What experience or training have you found helpful before a team starts using an AI tool, and how have you decided when and how to use it?

Scripture Forge and AI Drafting

- Jeff Webster



Recently Jeff Webster discussed his Scripture Forge and AI drafting experiences with Andrew Case on his Working for the Word - a Bible translation podcast.

This recorded conversation features Andrew Case interviewing Jeff Webster about the use of AI in Bible translation. Jeff, with extensive experience in Bible translation and innovative tools, explains the evolution of machine-assisted translation to the current AI drafting capabilities. He emphasizes that AI drafting, particularly through Scripture Forge, is a tool to assist translators by providing an initial draft, which is then refined and polished by the translation team following their established processes.

Jeff addresses the initial skepticism many teams have, comparing AI translation to a sculptor starting with a mold, requiring refinement by the translator. He highlights that the AI models used by Scripture Forge are trained on the translators' existing work, typically a completed New Testament, familiarizing the machine with their language and style.

The conversation delves into the practical steps for teams interested in exploring AI drafting using Scripture Forge. Jeff explains that Scripture Forge integrates with Paratext, allowing administrators to connect their projects and initiate the AI drafting process. Teams provide information about their project, translation style, and available source texts and back translations to train the AI model. He discusses the stages teams typically go through: skepticism, amazement, critical evaluation, and finally acceptance, after working with the AI-generated drafts. The discussion covers how to draft new books or complete existing ones, the possibility of blind evaluations comparing human and AI drafts, and the potential for AI to assist with back translations, improving consistency and saving time. While acknowledging that poetry and formatting present ongoing challenges, Jeff expresses optimism about the technology's ability to significantly accelerate the translation process and improve the initial quality of drafts, ultimately benefiting consultants and reducing burnout. He encourages teams with sufficient translated material (around 8,000 verses) and available back translations to try Scripture Forge, emphasizing its user-friendly interface and the support provided by the Scripture Forge team.

** AI was used to generate this summary from the audio of this podcast*

Missiological Reflection Opportunity

- Lillian McKeown

You are invited! The SIL Prayer Community of Practice will once again be hosting a missiological reflection, this time on the role of prayer in the life of the Apostle Paul. Lil McKeown, Eurasia Prayer Strategy Coordinator, will be facilitating in coordination with the SIL Prayer CoP and Spiritual Life Team. All SIL colleagues are welcome to join the Prayer CoP meetings on April 22 or 24. Click here for more details.

- **April 22nd Prayer CoP (West) 15:00-16:15 UTC** - Zoom Link
  - Dallas/Lima 10:00-11:15
  - London/Yaounde 16:00-17:15
  - Nairobi 18:00-19:15
- **April 24th Prayer CoP (East) 05:00-06:15 UTC** - Zoom Link
  - Bangkok 12:00-13:15
  - Melbourne/Port Moresby 15:00-16:15
  - Nairobi 8:00-9:15

New JOT Article *- Simon Mlundi*

SIL's *Journal of Translation* is proud to announce the publication of its first article of 2025:

Mlundi, Simon. 2025. "Amateur English-Kiswahili Interpretation in Tanzanian Pentecostal Churches: Challenges and Strategies." *Journal of Translation* 21 (1): 1–21. https://doi.org/10.54395/SM4C1.

Abstract - Interpreters apply different strategies to overcome challenges during the interpretation process. This study examines the frequency of strategies selected and utilised by amateur church interpreters in Tanzania in overcoming challenges of translation between English and Kiswahili. The analysis reveals that these interpreters use strategies such as expansion, compression, and skipping, as well as approximation, message abandonment, and incomplete sentences. More practice and self-training are recommended for amateur interpreters to use interpreting strategies more effectively.

JOT is SIL's open access, peer-reviewed academic journal of translation theory and practice with a special interest in sacred translation and local languages. Now that JOT has moved to rolling publication, readers can look forward to articles being released at regular intervals throughout the year. Articles are published online and can be accessed free of charge.

Grammar For Translation Workshops *- Tim Stirtz*

I urge others to take part in this event, which can . . . give you new skills to analyze your mother tongue in depth, or help you analyze another language so you can better translate the Word of God faithfully without betraying it.
Ouattara Balagassina, ANTBA Exegete

The Grammar for Translation Workshops trains translators and consultants to look for the mismatches in structures between the source and target language. For example, many African languages have a pronoun for "we and you" in addition to the pronoun for "we" as in Greek and English, and it can be challenging to know in which passages of Scripture to use each of these. In the workshop, the participants learn to recognize these mis-matches and how to choose well when there are choices forced by these mismatches. They also produce a cheat sheet that lists the choices, which they can then effectively use in translation drafting and consultant sessions for improved quality of Scripture.

There are two Grammar for Translation Workshops this year - one in French and one in English:

- 8-26 Sep 2025 - Mbandaka, DRC (French) Click here for **DRC** information.
- 5-25 Nov 2025 - Nairobi, Kenya (English) Click here **Kenya** information.

Patmos Initiative Launch *- 30 April 2025*

The Patmos World Bible Attitudes Survey is the most ambitious and pioneering Bible Engagement research project ever conducted due to its scale, methodology and reach. It is brought to you by the British and Foreign Bible Society, in partnership with United Bible Societies.

Conducted by Gallup, The Patmos Survey analyses the missiological context of 150 countries, exploring the religious attitudes and beliefs of 90,000 people in 85 countries, providing world class data, and establishing a new understanding of how people relate to the Bible.

For example, do you want to know how many people in Asia have heard of the Bible, broken down by their religious context? Or how many Christians in your country want to learn more about the Bible, or how they see it influencing life and society?

If you want to find out more, join the launch on 30 April 2025 to discover some fascinating insights from the project. Each session will share the methodology behind the survey, present headline findings about global Bible attitudes and global religious patterns, as well as hear from stakeholders about the potential impact of these insights on Bible engagement strategy. There are three sessions to accommodate different time zones, with translation available in Spanish and French.

- Register here for 30 April 2025, at 08:00 (UTC+1)
- Register here for 30 April 2025, at 13:00 (UTC+1)
- Register here for 30 April 2025, at 19:00 (UTC+1)

Coming Events

- 2025 - 28 Apr-16 May. Narrative Discourse Analysis for Translation (in French). Cameroon
- 2025 - 05-10 May. ICON-25: The SIL International Conference & Vision 2025 Celebration. Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2025 - 19-22 May. EMDC. The Netherlands
- 2025 - 10-23 September. Narrative Discourse Analysis for Translation. Tanzania
- 2025 - 28-31 October. Bible Translation Conference 2025. Chiangmai, Thailand. Click here to register

Useful Links

- Bible Translation Consultant Competencies / YouTube channel for BT Competencies
- SIL Senior Translation Consultants
- Email the SIL International Translation Office / International Translation Services ILS 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 / Journal of Translation
- Mentoring Matters website - Mentor Training Courses
- Consultant Development and Management Team
- Progress.Bible Information / Memoriam website

SIL Translation Services

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- Kris Toler - *SIL Coordinator for Oral Translation Services*
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- Jonathan van den Broek - *Anglo-Lusophone Africa*
- (Currently Open) - *Eurasia*
- Rick Floyd & Dwight Shaver - *Americas*
- Bernadet van der Louw - *Global Sign Languages Team (GSLT)*

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This newsletter is produced by SIL Translation Services. 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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SIL Translation Services
SIL International
7500 W Camp Wisdom Rd
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