Subject August 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.

August 2025

- A Word that Leads us Home - **Viji Mathew**
- New Multimodal Bible Translation CoP - **Kris Toler**
- *Is it good enough?* - **Phil King**
- Help Shape the Future of AI Integration - **Drew Maust**
- New Translation Consultants -
  - **Philip Swan** (AsiaPacific)
  - **Margarita Castro** (Americas)
  - **Nick B** (Asia)
- Interviews with Translation Consultants - **Becky Grossmann** (Africa)
- News
  - Biblical Discourse Conference - **JoAnna Hoyt**
  - Oral Bible Translation Video - **FCBH**

- Coming Events
  - Narrative Discourse Analysis for Translation (Sep 2025) Tanzania
  - Africa Oral Bible Translation Consultation (Oct 2025) Online Consultation
  - Bible Translation Conference 25 (Oct 2025) Thailand
  - FLExTrans Workshop (Nov 2025) Thailand
  - Biblical Discourse Conference (Jan 2026) DIU
  - EMDC (May 2026) Thailand

- Useful Links
- SIL Translation Services
  - International Leadership Team
  - Area Translation Coordinators

A Word that Leads us Home

- *Viji Mathew* *- Director, Global Consultant Pool*

For the past few months our newsletter has begun with members of the ITS team sharing what motivates them to be involved in Bible translation. This month we hear from Viji Mathew.

I was born into an Eastern Orthodox Christian family, where the rhythm of church life was deeply ingrained in me. I was religious—devout, even—participating in every ritual with reverence.

But it wasn't until I personally engaged with the Scriptures that something shifted. What was once a sacred text reserved for ceremonial readings suddenly turned into a mirror that revealed the depths of my sinful nature. It revealed the darkness of my heart, convicted me of sin, and called me into the light. Alone in my room, with nothing but that book in hand, I fell to my knees in joyful surrender. That encounter marked not just my transformation, but the beginning of a lifelong pursuit to bring the life-giving Word of God to others.

Soon after, I began hearing stories—compelling accounts from the frontlines of Bible translation. I longed for a glimpse of this impact with my own eyes. One such opportunity came nearly thirty years ago. I trekked five hours through treacherous terrain, crossing swollen riverbeds, rain pouring down, to deliver printed portions of Luke's Gospel to a remote village. We arrived long after sunset. To my astonishment, the villagers were still waiting—eager, expectant. As we handed them the pages, they clutched them with trembling hands, rushed to a nearby porch, and under the flickering flame of a kerosene lamp, began reading aloud in their mother tongue. There was no preacher, no sermon, just the raw, sacred power of the Word reaching hearts for the first time. That night, I witnessed the hunger of a people who had waited not for men—but for God to speak in their language.

Since then, across nations and among countless language groups, I've seen the same longing—for a Word that knows their name, speaks their pain, and leads them home. The tools have changed. The technologies have advanced. But the thirst remains unchanged. And what's more, I've seen something extraordinary: when people engage with Scripture in their heart language, transformation begins. Morality deepens. Relationships heal. Economic stability increases. Ownership in communities rises. And peace—true peace—starts to dwell. It is life. It is not information. It is incarnation. That, to me, is one of the greatest signs that God is still at work.

Perhaps most urgently—I believe we are living in a time where the clock is not in our favor. The harvest is ripe, but the laborers are still too few. As we await the return of Christ, we cannot afford to move slowly. The Great Commission is not a slogan—it's a sacred mandate. We must act with holy urgency, collaborating across organizations, denominations, and nations to make the Scriptures available in every language that still waits. Because every tongue deserves to hear His truth. Every community deserves the chance to flourish through His Word. And every translator, mentor, consultant, and supporter has a part to play in preparing the way of the Lord. That is what drives me each day in my work with the Global Consultant Pool. I consider it not just a role but a calling that stirs my heart, sharpens my vision, and keeps my knees on the ground in prayer.

New Multimodal Bible Translation CoP

- Kris Toler

As I have talked with people within the OBT movement over the past several months, it has been apparent that we need a space to share about topics related to multimodal Bible translation since the Orality Landscape of Practice has ceased meeting.

I am excited to share that we have a community space set up on the EMDC Academy online platform. It is called Multimodal Bible Translation. This will give us a space that can include all modes of translation, and will be open to people from any organization. Using the EMDC online platform will also allow us to keep the recordings available online. You can sign up by registering at (https://emdc.academy/list/1803) and clicking the "subscribe to this series" button.

It is my hope and prayer that this will be a space where we can share successes, struggles, experiences and encourage one another in all aspects of multimodal translation. If you know of someone who should be included in this, please feel free to share this invitation with them.

The first meeting will take place on August 12, 2025, at 9:00am CDT (Dallas). This is the same time slot that the Landscape of Practice used to meet, on the second Tuesday of each month. The topic for the first meeting is "The Origins of the Spoken English Bible and Unique Challenges of OBT in America." The Spoken English Bible translation team will be sharing about their project and the unique challenges that they have faced.

I hope that you will come and be encouraged by what they have to share.

Is it good enough?

- Phil King

Last week, I spent a couple of days with folk from the ETEN Innovation Lab to discuss assessing and improving translation within the 'church-based' translation paradigm. As ever, I've come away with ideas swirling around my mind! At the heart of the discussion was the issue of how a church might know if they have a quality translation. Perhaps this could be rephrased as 'is our translation good enough?', though that begs the questions 'good enough for what?' and 'good enough for who?'

In SIL, we've relied on our consultants to help churches and communities assess and improve their translations - but are there 'equivalent processes' (as suggested by the FOBAI Basic Principles and Procedures) that could be used by those working outside the framework of translation agencies? These are some of the things we looked at:

- Teryl Gonzalez shared a 'multi-lens index' she is exploring as a tool to assess different aspects of translation quality, including lenses that focus on the process used, the exegetical resources consulted, the use and trust by the community and church, analytical checks of the text, the use of an external review, alignment with the translation brief, and ownership and sustainability. I love the way she's seeking to develop accessible tools that capture so many different angles that consultants are often thinking about - keep an eye out to see how it develops.
- The use of Competency-Based Certification (CBC) and the resources on the BIble Translation Competencies website as a way for people to grow in their technical skills to assess and improve translations.
- Possibilities of AI to support church-based translation. Of course there are so many options now! One tool that was new to me was unfoldingWord's 'Bible Translation Servant' which allows you to ask questions to an AI chatbot via a WhatsApp number that will seek to answer or transfer you to an online consultant if it reaches the end of its knowledge. Another tool could help give a Hebrew or Greek interlinear in an LWC, to increase access to the original languages. If you have other ideas of useful AI developments we should be investing in, please do respond to the survey from SIL's AI Integration Advisory Group (see below).
- Wycliffe Associates 'Refinement and Publication' process. As with WA's drafting process, this approach draws on the strength of large groups of people working together on translation, but at this stage equipped with training and detailed checklists to evaluate every drafted passage for accuracy, clarity, naturalness, grammar, history, key terms, spelling, translation style and more. Take a look and see if any of these checklists or other parts of the process could be useful in your context. All are freely available.
- Finally, we looked at the FOBAI Basic Principles and Procedures and how they might apply to projects outside of the traditional agencies, especially in light of the potential revision to these principles that was discussed during the FOBAI annual meeting earlier this year.

Help Shape the Future of AI Integration

- Drew Maust

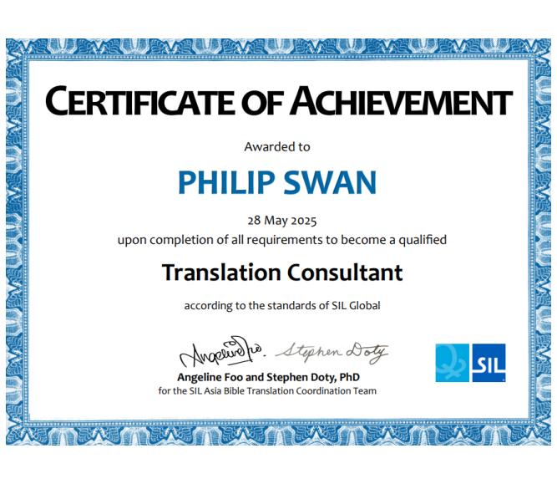
SIL's **AI Integration Advisory Group** invites you to help shape the future of AI integration across SIL's language technology efforts by submitting your ideas through this brief survey.

Whether you work directly in Bible translation, support field teams, develop software, or see workflow challenges from another perspective, your insights are vital. We are looking for practical problems, pain points, or repetitive manual tasks where you believe AI could make a meaningful difference. Your suggestions—big or small—will help the new AI Integration Advisory Group identify and prioritize the most impactful opportunities for prototyping and implementation. Thank you for helping us launch this important initiative!

New Translation Consultants

Philip Swan (AsiaPacific), Margarita Castro (Americas), Nick B (Asia)

Philip Swan ***- AsiaPacific***



CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT
Awarded to
PHILIP SWAN
28 May 2025
upon completion of all requirements to become a qualified
Translation Consultant
according to the standards of SIL Global
Angeline Foo and Stephen Doty, PhD
for the SIL Asia Bible Translation Coordination Team

Congratulations to Philip Swan (SIL Australia) who joins his wife Guinevere as a Translation Consultant with SIL AsiaPacific. He attended the Asia TCDW in 2021 and has been mentored by David Andersen.

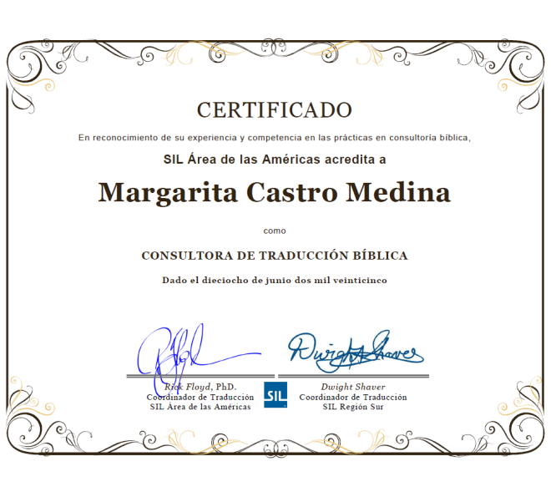
Philip worked with a local NGO in Papua, Indonesia between 2009 and 2019 assisting the Kemtuik people engage with their New Testament (published 2008), and facilitating Bible translation, orthography design and literacy development with the neighbouring Namblong people.

In 2020 the Swans relocated to Melbourne, Australia where Philip is now on academic staff at SIL Australia, teaching Phonetics, Phonology and Community-Based Orthography Design. He continues to support the Namblong language team remotely, and is now doing some translation consulting for other Indonesian teams through SIL Asia.

Philip earned a Master of Applied Linguistics from the University of New England (Australia) in 2021. His thesis explored how different levels of community participation affected the ultimate quality and use of three Namblong orthographies which had been developed at different times.

He is currently working with an international team developing an "Orthography Assessment Tool" which they hope will assist language teams to identify strengths and address weaknesses in their orthographies.

Margarita Castro - ***Americas***



CERTIFICADO
En reconocimiento de su experiencia y competencia en las prácticas en consultoría bíblica,
SIL Área de las Américas acredita a
Margarita Castro Medina
como
CONSULTORA DE TRADUCCIÓN BÍBLICA
Dado el dieciocho de junio dos mil veinticinco
Rick Floyd, PhD. Coordinador de Traducción SIL Área de las Américas
Dwight Shaver Coordinador de Traducción SIL Región Sur

Congratulations to Margarita Castro (SIL Americas) on completing all requirements to become a Translation Consultant. Dr. Elke Müller (SIL Mexico) was her primary mentor. Margarita completed the three Americas Area workshops for translation CiTs from 2020 to 2022. Since 1994 she has worked with SIL Mexico and also in collaboration with a number of other organizations. Currently she is with the German Missionary Fellowship (DMG), as she has dual German and Mexican nationality.

Margarita has been working in Bible translation since 1990 when she began assisting the Nahuatl variant of Durango-Nayarit team, also known as Mexicanero / Meshikan. In 2002, upon completing the linguistic description of this variant (Phonology, Grammar, and Lexicography), she began developing the script in collaboration with native-speaking teachers and the National Indigenous Education Institutions (SEP and DGEI in Durango). In 2010 she moved into Bible translation, organizing a team of qualified native speakers and training them as as translators for their language.

Margarita completed a BA (1985) in Literature and Theatre at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) with a thesis entitled: "*El Origen Ritual del Teatro de Sombras*" (The ritual origin of shadow theatre). In 1989 she completed Theology training at Missionshaus Wiedenest (Germany). Her MA (1995) in Lingüística (linguistics) was from the ENAH (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia / National School of Anthropology and History) with a thesis on "*Un estudio sobre la trayectoria histórico-lingüística del Mexicanero de San Pedro Jícora, Durango*" (An examination of the historical-linguistic path of the Mexicanero in San Pedro Jícora, State of Durango). She then obtained the PhD (2000) General Linguistics, with Anthropology and Romance Philology/Spanish as subsidiary subjects, at the University of Cologne under a Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) scholarship. Her dissertation is *"Descripción morfológica del sistema verbal del Mexicanero de San Pedro Jícora, Variante dialectal del nahua de Durango, México"* (Morphological description of the verbal system of the Mexicanero of San Pedro Jícora. A dialectal variant of Nahuatl in Durango, Mexico).

Nick B - ***Asia***

Congratulations to Nick B (SIL South Asia) on completing all the requirements for certification as an Translation Consultant, under the guidance of his supervising mentor, Ed Boehm. Sung-Woo Lee (SIL South Asia, Professional Development Coordinator) has approved his application, and the Asia Bible Translation Coordination Team has verified that he is a qualified Translation Consultant and able to work independently with teams.

Nick served as a translation advisor for six years, working alongside three translation teams. He also helped mentor three local translators to become advisors for their own projects.

Nick has taught various sessions on translation principles, key terms, and other translation topics at workshops (2019-present). He completed the Asia TCDW in 2022 and then successfully finished seven mentored checks under seven different consultants.

We celebrate with Nick in achieving this important milestone! We look forward to his consulting expertise being put to good use in this region in the years ahead.

Interviews with Translation Consultants

We asked experienced Translation Consultant, Becky Grossmann (LBT Africa), to share her thoughts concerning her 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.

Becky Grossmann ***- LBT Africa***

How did you get interested in Bible translation?
I got interested in Bible translation as a young girl of 5 or 6. My mom and I would pray for missionaries, one in particular was Helen Marten who worked for many years in PNG. When I found out that she was doing Bible translation because these people didn't have Bibles, it broke my heart. How could people learn about my best friend Jesus without a Bible? God put his call on my heart then to follow in Helen's footsteps.

What gets you excited when you work with others in Bible translation? I love to see the joy they have when the translation makes sense to them. Or, when they have an aha moment. Or better yet when they share a story of how the community gets excited about hearing God's Word in their own language.

What is your consulting philosophy? I try to be flexible with whatever is needed. Where tutoring may be necessary to grasp a concept, or use a tool, or perform a task in Paratext, I will take the time to do that. I try to be available when and where is most convenient for the team. I see myself coming alongside the work they have done and assist them to make it the best they can. Excellence is always at the fore.

What translation resources do you really value? The UBS handbooks are single-handedly the most accessible and informative. However, the TNN and TND are very helpful as well as the T4T and a variety of English source texts for the teams I am working with.

How do you continue to grow as a consultant? Since completing my DMin (Doctor of Ministry) degree, I have not done as much professional development as I probably should. I read the The Bible Translator published by UBS and other resources as they come up in various communications from other consultants. I have done some restudy of the Biblical languages and continue to seek out classes on EMDC. I also completed an online consultant training course that I had downloaded during Covid. It was a good review as well as a way to capture favorite practices of other consultants. LBT holds a mission conference every year which is a great place to connect and share ideas, resources, and practice. I also attend many of the international Bible Translation Conferences held by SIL.

How do you share your translation discoveries with others? Mostly in my prayer letter.

Can you share about a time when you realized you were wrong and what you learned from it? I had recommended a certain translation as a way to be very clear on a particular passage. From gleanings from coursework during my DMin and interviewing other translators in other projects in the same country, I learned that what I did probably drew too much attention to a particular aspect of the verse that wasn't even in focus. It also took away naturalness when the common word under question was probably the correct way all along. I went back and talked to the team, and they agreed that changing it back to the commonly used word was good. This incident helped the team see that I was not infallible, that they could push back on what I said, and I learned that I need to be careful, extra careful, as my position gives me authority in the teams' eyes and I must not misuse it to force my view.

What are your top tips for someone starting on a career path in Bible translation? Be open to change. Be flexible. Sometimes God leads us around on a path not of our choosing to prepare us for the path He has chosen.

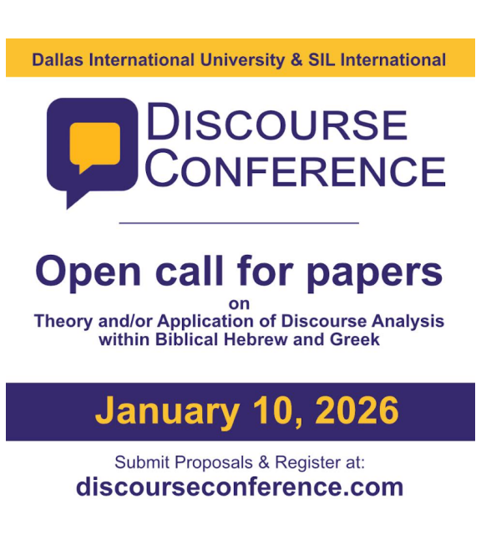
Share something that you learned from a mentor or from a mentee? I'm still learning that the relationship is more important than the task. I get lessons often from mentors, peers, and mentees concerning this topic.

What do you see as the place of the church in Bible translation? The church should be a driving force behind a translation. They (if you can tap into all the local denominations) should be involved from the beginning and have a say in the direction, style, and purpose of the translation as they are the ones who will hopefully use it.

What would you say to young/aspiring translators? How important the work is for the transmission of the Gospel as well as language development. I often remind the teams I work with that they are making history and setting precedent, so they need to take time as they make decisions concerning both the text and the written word.

News

Biblical Discourse Conference - ***JoAnna Hoyt***



Dallas International University & SIL International
DISCOURSE CONFERENCE
Open call for papers
on
Theory and/or Application of Discourse Analysis within Biblical Hebrew and Greek
January 10, 2026
Submit Proposals & Register at:
discourseconference.com

This Biblical Discourse Conference will focus broadly on discourse theories and their application to the biblical languages. Dallas International University and SIL Global are pleased to announce the second Discourse Conference, to be held on 10 January 2026. This one-day event builds on the success of the inaugural 2024 conference and continues the conversation on how discourse studies illuminate our understanding of biblical texts. Considering both well-established and emerging approaches to biblical interpretation, we invite scholars, graduate students, and practitioners to submit paper proposals engaging the structure, function, and meaning of biblical texts through the lens of discourse.

Paper abstracts are due August 30, 2025. Registration Ticket costs. Tickets are refundable 100% up to 10 December 2025.

Hosted by Dallas International University, this one-day conference will feature a plenary speaker (Dr. Elizabeth Robar), roundtable discussion, and up to 20 selected papers. Authors of exceptional papers may be invited to contribute to an edited volume on the topic. A light breakfast and full lunch will be provided for in-person attendees. Virtual attendance via Zoom is an option for both presenters and attendees. Session recordings will be available to registrants after the end of the conference.

Oral Bible Translation Video - ***FCBH***

Here's a recent video highlighting the impact of Oral Bible Translation (OBT) around the world since the OBT Global Gathering in Uganda in 2023. The video was produced by Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) and features our colleague Alex Mathew.

Coming Events

- 2025 - 10-23 September. Narrative Discourse Analysis for Translation. Tanzania
- 2025 - 14-16 October. Africa Oral Bible Translation Consultation. Online Consultation. Click here to register
- 2025 - 28-31 October. Bible Translation Conference 2025. Chiangmai, Thailand. Click here to register
- 2025 - 03-06 November. FLExTrans Workshop. Chiang Mai, Thailand. Click here to register
- 2026 - 10 January. Biblical Discourse Conference. DIU
- 2026 - 18-21 May. EMDC. Chiangmai, Thailand.

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

International Leadership Team

- Phil King - I*TS Director & Coordinator for Translation Training and Development*
- Angeline Foo - *SIL Coordinator for Translation Research and Practice*
- Nick Peterson - *SIL Coordinator for Translation Resources*
- Kris Toler - *SIL Coordinator for Oral Translation Services*
- Viji Mathew - *Director, Global Consultant Pool*
- Brian Migliazza - *ITS Operations and Project Management*

Area Translation Coordinators

- AsiaPacific - Angeline Foo *& Greg Carlson*
- EurAsia - (To Be Confirmed)
- Africa - Drew Maust & Jonathan van den Broek
- Americas - Rick Floyd & Dwight Shaver & Dany Tasama
- GSLT - Bernadet van der Louw

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

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 International
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