



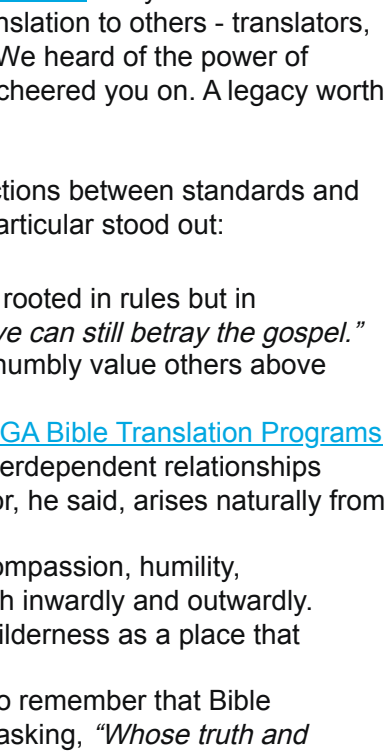
SIL Translation Services (STS) works in collaboration with colleagues in SIL and other agencies to creatively extend and advance translation practices, tools, methods, and training necessary to enable a supportive environment for individuals and communities to flourish and engage with Scripture.

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

November 2025

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"Quality standards are in the minds of individuals" - Phil King



The landscape of Bible translation is changing. Translation approaches are multiplying, with growing emphasis on AI, church-based translation, and oral translation. New organisations are being joyfully welcomed into the SIL global community—some with long-standing SIL DNA, others bringing fresh perspectives. SIL's role in the wider Bible translation movement is also shifting as we see different organisations being inspired by the call to eradicate Bible poverty. At the same time, there's a renewed focus on ensuring that with tools and training, the transformative impact we hope for.

In this context, the new SIL Global Plan invites us to use "standards... that influence and are influenced by the broader movement", and which are informed by evidence, contextually relevant and sustainable.

The SIL Translation Leadership community (global and area coordinators) met in Thailand at the end of October to begin exploring what this means in practice. As we listened to one another's contexts, a phrase surfaced repeatedly in different words: "Quality standards are in the minds of individuals." In other words, we know what to do—and how to do it—because of how we were trained or mentored. And when we're unsure, we look for a person, not a document.

It's a timely reminder of the importance of people—the humans at the heart of our work, and the relationships between them. This group was echoed the following week at the BT Conference, most personally in the final banquet as people shared their memories of our much-loved colleague Katy Barnwell, who passed away last month. Katy lived out the vision of passing on her knowledge and skills to others, and we were inspired by her wisdom, advisors and consultants alike, whatever their background. We heard of the power of hearing her simple words, "Well done" as she watched and cheered you on. A legacy worth emulating.

As I listened to the rest of the conference the ethical connections between standards and the role that people play in AI here. A few moments in particular stood out.

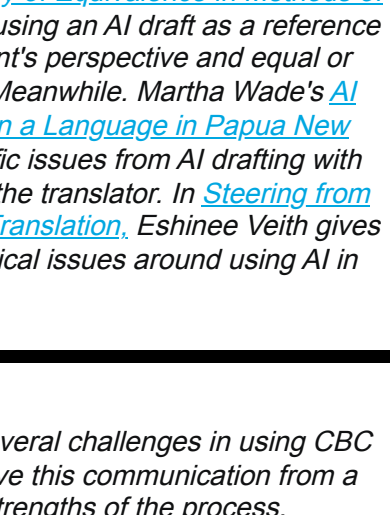
- Johnstone Ndoune (SIL) reminded us that ethics are not rooted in rules but in relationships—challenging us that "two lives without love can still betray the gospel"
- To translate ethically is to live within the story where we humbly value others above ourselves (Philippians 2)
- Paul Kimb (Wycliffe Global Alliance) pointed us to the [WGA Bible Translation Programs Philosophy](#), noting that quality flows from sustainable, interdependent relationships rather than isolated technical benchmarks. Technical rigour, he said, arises naturally from healthy partnerships and accountability
- Kirk Franklin took us to Job 31 where integrity, justice, compassion, humility, accountability, and transparency shaped who he is as a person and as a leader
- Edgêr Egojo (United Bible Society) reminded us of the wilderness as a place that nurtures ethics of charity, humility, and sincerity
- Hsiao-ni Tsai (Wycliffe) reminded us of the importance of remembering that Bible translation is not just a scholarly task but a sacred trust, asking, "Whose truth and power shape Bible translation?"

All these perspectives remind me that our pursuit of contextualised quality standards must be a shared journey, done in community—a community of grace and hope, as the Global Plan also declares in its 4.

The rest of the conference explored ethics in Bible translation from every imaginable angle. AI finance, consultant practice, community engagement, exegesis, translation processes, and more. There's a lot to process. Look out for further reflections in upcoming newsletters (and the presenters' orca tey're available on the BT Conference website). I was deeply encouraged by the dedication of brothers and sisters to investigate deeply, ask hard questions, and share their discoveries for the enrichment of our wider community. Thank you to all who participated!

As we move forward, let's continue to build not only stronger translation standards, but stronger relationships rooted in humanity, sustained by grace, and shaped by our shared calling to make God's Word known.

Africa Oral Bible Translation Consultation - Kris Toler



The Africa Oral Bible Translation Consultation, held from October 14–16, brought together a vibrant community of 860 registered participants representing 67 countries. During the event, 34 attendees engaged in dynamic discussions and presentations.

For those who could not join live, recordings of the sessions are now accessible on the official website: <https://aotes.google.com/event/organisations>.

The consultation featured a diverse range of presentations, including updates from the ETEN Innovation Lab, insights on Emotion Exegesis, a celebration of the Bengali New Testament dedication and their future plans, a case study on OBT in Nigeria, a comparison of Deaf and Oral Translation, a discussion of what is on the horizon regarding OBT and AI, a discussion of quality assurance practices across organisations, and an update on church-based translation methodology.

Mark your calendar! Next year's Africa Oral Bible Translation Consultation is tentatively set for October 13–15, 2026. We look forward to welcoming you for another inspiring and impactful event.

AI and Translation Issues - Beth Bryson

[Beth Bryson](#) (Dictionary/Lexicography Services and FLEXTrans team) gave an overview of AI issues for the October 2025 Chiangmai, Thailand meetings of the *Area Translation Coordinators* and the *International Translation Services* staff.

The Scripture Forge AI Drafting team reports that there are roughly 300 projects currently using AI Drafting. In the past, of teams that tested it out, roughly 50% found it useful enough to continue. Recently that number has risen to around 60%.

The Scripture Forge team has developed a set of "readiness criteria" to ensure that teams are more likely to have a positive experience. Some of the criteria include:

- Readiness of the project: Translation brief in place, clarity about which dialect is being targeted, stable orthography
- Readiness of the translators: already trained in translation skills and with some experience, preferably having manually translated at least one book
- Readiness of the stakeholders (including the church, church leadership, consultant, funders): Are all of these stakeholders on board with the idea of AI Drafting? Have they been trained about what the technology can and can't do, and how to work with it responsibly?

At the BT Conference, the paper "[Ready or Not, Here AI Comes! Practical Considerations for Ethical AI Drafting in Bible Translation](#)" (Taehoo Jang, et al) explored these ideas. Email Taehoo.Jang for the full written paper.

In discussions about AI Drafting on the Linguistics Awareness List, there was agreement that training for working with AI drafts would be similar to the training needed for a traditional approach. It is still essential to develop discussion of target language features that are not used in the source language, especially features that force a choice. This requires a good and conscious understanding of the morphosyntax of the target language, as well as the necessary exegetical skills to determine the contextual meanings of the source that underpin the needed choices.

In a recent presentation through EMDc online (<https://emdc.academy/list/995>), [Eshime Veth](#) explored the kinds of mistakes AI Drafting lists to make, and thus we need to train those who are reviewing these drafts to watch out for these kinds of issues.

AI drafting was explored in a number of other papers at the BT Conference last week. For example, the research project from Prescience Labs, [A Study of Exegetical and Ideological Issues AI-Generated Drafts in Bible Translation](#), found that using an AI draft as a reference text led to quicker drafting, better quality from a consultant's perspective and equal or better internalisation by the team than manual drafting. Meanwhile, Martha Madezi-Ji [Drafting of Scripture: A Detailed Analysis of the Results in a Language in Focus New Guinea](#) gives a fantastic breakdown of some of the specific issues from AI drafting with Scripture Forge, but also notes the positive life impact on the translator. In [Scripture Forge: Applying an Ethical Research Lens to AI and Bible Translation](#), Eshime Veth gives a clear and robust framework for thinking through the ethical issues around using AI in Bible Translation projects.

While we recognize that in some contexts there are still several challenges in using CBC and competency manager well, we were grateful to receive this communication from a Consultant in Training about how they only use it as a strength of the process.

Advantages of Using CBC to Track CIT Growth Plan - Yoseph Yisma



The Competency Based Certification (CBC) platform is a system that participants will be able to assess competency levels, develop growth plans, and collaboratively track progress, with all activities recorded on the platform. I believe the platform is highly beneficial for mentors, CITs, and the consultant certification review committee for multiple key reasons. I will, however, list just four of them here.

First, the system begins by assessing and recording all that the CIT has accomplished prior to joining the CIT track. The layout is user-friendly, categorizing activities into groups such as "Bible," "Hermeneutics & Exegesis," and "Communication & Context." Each category includes descriptions, instructions, resources, and tasks, which helps eliminate confusion. For CITs, this journey focuses mentors to easily evaluate the academic credentials and resumes of CITs while working collaboratively.

Second, the CITs primarily enrolment on acquiring knowledge in areas such as Scripture, hermeneutics, linguistics, and other related fields, along with practical on-the-job training. Mentors assign courses, activities, and tasks, all of which can be recorded on the platform. Unlike emails, physical files, and other related files, the CBC platform provides a robust and intuitive system that allows mentors to monitor progress holistically rather than through isolated activities. Additionally, CITs can visualize their progress and identify areas needing improvement to achieve certification as consultants.

Third, the CBC platform not only stores records of previous competencies and completed activities for the CITs but also features a comprehensive library spanning various domains, including linguistics, literacy and education, translation, scripture engagement, and media. This library contains PDFs, videos, PowerPoint presentations, and links to educational resources. For CITs, this means they no longer have to search extensively for materials; the CBC library serves as a centralized starting point for accessing resources.

Fourth, when the consultant certification review committee evaluates the submitted certification requests, they will not need to conduct an investigative review or decipher incomplete dossiers. The CBC platform provides a clear and comprehensive report of each CIT's journey, complete with timestamps from the very beginning. This allows the committee to make informed decisions based on concrete and reliable data. CITs can also upload training materials, consultant evaluation reports, and endorsements to the platform.

In conclusion, the CBC website is not merely a technological upgrade; it represents a significantly improved method for assessing, recording, planning, monitoring, and evaluating the CIT journey in an organized and systematic manner. This advancement benefits the CITs, the mentors, and the certification review committee for consultants. The platform enhances transparency between CITs and mentors, providing a trustworthy dossier for the review committee's decision-making process.

New Senior Translation Consultant

KM - Eurasia

Congratulations to KM on her recent consultation as a SIL Senior Translation Consultant. As someone of the KVM panel noted: *KM strikes me as a unique contributor to the consultant corps—her long experience in her main region of work and her concern for mentoring, and for adherence to guidelines and best practices, point her as a very valuable team member with special gifts that are not easily developed or necessarily found widely in our translation world.*

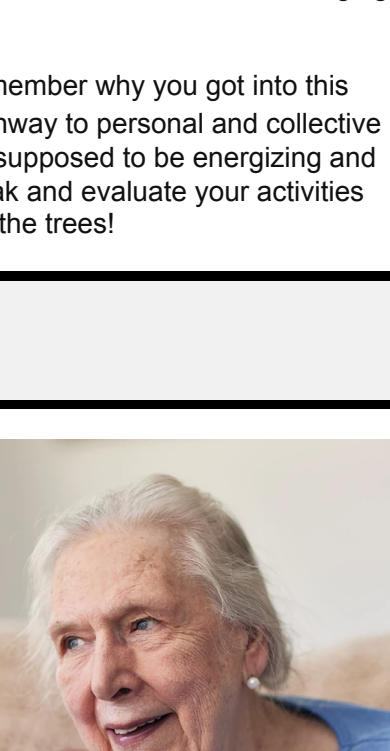
She joined Wycliffe Germany in 1998 and served in West Eurasia. KM conducted language survey in Central Asia and then assisted in a minority language project in Central West Asia. In 2017 she qualified as a translation consultant and has served a wide range of teams, from new to experienced, in both OT and NT, as well as Scripture-based products. She has mentored a number of translation CITs and in recent years has also served with the Area Translation Biblical Languages.

KM has an MA in Biblical Languages (2015) and an MA in Applied Linguistics (2015). She speaks German, English, Russian, and several other languages of Eurasia.

Interviews with Translation Consultants

We asked experienced Translation Consultant, [Nathan Esala](#), to share his thoughts concerning his 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.

Nathan Esala - Africa (SC & LBT)



How did you get interested in Bible translation?

In high school, I traveled to Moscow to play basketball and distribute Bibles with kids from Ohio, Illinois, and Florida. This was in 1992. My world opened up! I was surprised to find that some of the Russian people were when they received New Testaments in Russian. I was not surprised how good the Russians were at basketball! When I returned home, I went to my grandfather, who read from the Greek New Testament every morning. I relevant elements regarding discourse analysis and contextual background of the source studying both Greek and Hebrew in college at Concordia University Wisconsin.

At Concordia, I met a lifelong friend, David Federwitz, who grew up as a missionary kid in Liberia. His parents were missionaries with Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT). A few years later, I married Sarah. The two of us took a trip to Bible Africa, organized by David's mom, Amina Federwitz. On that trip, we got a taste of a number of approaches to Bible translation mission. We were especially impressed with the ministry of Jonathan and Nancy Burnmaster among the Ayin in Code Dvorka and the ministry of the Lutheran Bible Translation and Literacy Organization, which Dale and Amina Federwitz mentored in Monrovia. After that trip, both Sarah and I became more interested in LBT and Bible translation work. A few years later, we joined LBT and were assigned to Ghana with David and Valerie Federwitz. Now I work with Seed Company as the Coordinator for Strategic Alliances with an MOU with LBT regarding my role mobilizing mainline churches in Bible translation (BT).

What gets you excited when you work with others in Bible translation? I am most excited when people struggle with Scripture. How do we interpret it? How do we translate it in our context? How do we apply it in the situations we are facing? How is God at work through this biblical story so that people experience life and life more abundantly? Most frequently, I experience this "energy" when I facilitate a process called [Contextual Bible Study](#).

What is your consulting philosophy? Usually, I work with teams that have formed a [translation brief](#). What are the "givens" for this team and this assignment? How can I help them improve their processes, given their starting points? How can they improve their translation and quality assurance skills along the way?

I encourage teams to consider their audiences. Because I work in Africa, I approach translation as an exercise in *"Contextual Biblical Studies."* I want translators to take their audience's context and questions seriously. They should be excellent communicators, using more than one *modus*: writing, oral performance, drama, and visual media. I want to be good facilitators and good collaborators, sharing what they know and learn from others in their churches and communities.

I equip teams to engage in literary analysis: characters, setting, plot, conflict, etc. In other genres, I help them use rhetorical analysis. Their goal is to help their audiences imagine and engage with the biblical exegesis in life-giving ways.

What translation resources do you really value? I read [African Biblical Scholarship](#). These resources are not found in standard translation helps. I use the biblical lexicon and tools built into Paratext for basic searches, the lexicons, etc. I consult the UBS handbooks. I especially like literary analysis, such as is found in the Bertl Oam commentary series. I value resources that highlight the agricultural and social background of the ancient Near East. I also appreciate resources that explore indigenous worldviews and how those worldviews unpack biblical narratives.

How do you continue to grow as a consultant? I have been learning a lot about Seed Company's Oral Bible Storytelling methodology and pedagogy in Tanzania. I continue to read in the areas of translation studies and biblical studies. I keep experimenting with Contextual Bible Study experiences and their relevance to Bible translation in Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, and the United States.

How do you share your translation discoveries with others? I present papers at the biennial BT conference, and I published a book last year. I contributed articles in two other books. Currently, I am the chair of a new consultation at the Society of Biblical Literature's Annual Meeting, called *"Global Bible Translation Studies."* I make use of the [MAP site](#) and the BT discussion list.

Can you share about a time when you realized you were wrong and what you learned from it? [See the following link](#) for my story about career path Luke 13 and the portion about Herod as a "fox."

What are your top tips for someone starting on a career path in Bible translation? Follow what energizes you and motivates you to be involved in this work. But at the same time, open yourself up to other people's perspectives. Engage in critical but caring self-reflection with the help of trusted guides.

Share something that you learned from a mentor or from a mentee? I was mentored by Dr. Fabian Dapile, formerly of UBS and Seed Company. Dr. Dapile passed away a year or so ago. When he was checking a passage where John the Baptist said, "...the ax is at the root of the tree," Dr. Dapile asked if their community had ever cleared trees to farm an area. What do they do at the end of the day, when they have finished today's work, but need to carry on tomorrow? What do they do with the ax? The translators answered that they take the ax and hit the tree that they will cut down tomorrow, leaving the ax there for the next day. There was a specific word for this that otherwise would not have been in the translation. Dr. Dapile was always having the team imagine the stories in their contexts, eliciting words and images that the team would not have used if they were only translating the words of the source text.

What do you see as the place of the church in Bible translation? The church is central to the BT task. For a long time, BT agencies have been at the center of BT activities with the churches revolving around them, but this is changing. The church is moving back into the center with BT agencies taking a step back. This calls for more intense sharing of knowledge between churches and global Bible translation networks, so that we can further equip each other in life-giving ways, as God continues to transform us in this ever-changing world.

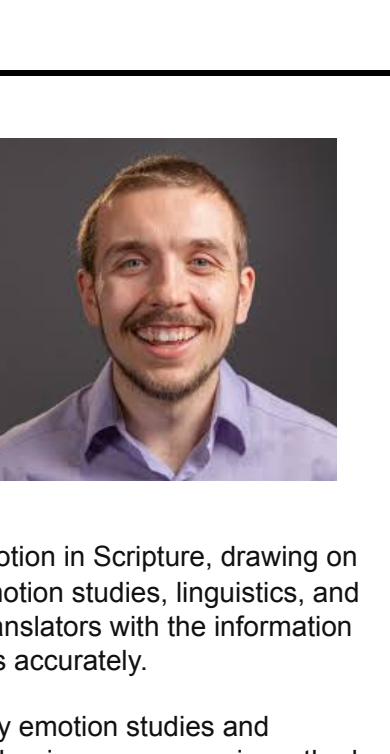
What would you say to young aspiring translators? Remember why you got into this work. If you are like me, it was because the Bible was a pathway to personal and collective transformation. The translation/interpretation of the Bible is supposed to be energizing and life-giving. When you start getting bogged down, take a break and evaluate your activities by going back to your "why," so you don't lose the forest for the tree!

Memoriam

Obituary: Katy Barnwell (1938-2025)

Dr. Katharine "Katy" Barnwell passed away 29 September, 2025, at the age of 87. Described by many as the "mother of modern bible translation", Katy's translation methodology and training curriculum have equipped thousands of translators, many without formal linguistic degrees. Through her gentle mentorship and extensive expertise, she championed local leaders, encouraging them to press forward in translating the Bible into their languages.

- [SIL Tribute to Katy](#)
- [SC Tribute to Katy](#)
- [SC Katy Video](#) - The Language of Faith
- [Wycliffe Bible Translators Tribute to Katy](#)
- [Outsourcing Today: Katy's Advice](#)



News

[Jerusalem Center for Bible Translators - an Accredited Hebrew University Program since 1995](#)

Israel Two-Week Study Tour - January 2026

JCBT (Jerusalem Center for Bible Translators) is offering an immersive, two-week (04-17 January 2026) course that will explore the rich historical, cultural, and geographical context of the Bible by focusing on Israel as the central land in biblical events. Participants will engage with the land itself, visiting key locations mentioned in the Bible, which will help them gain insights into translation issues and find solutions that respect the cultural and linguistic nuances of the ancient texts. For further information, email Wima.Bosman-Levy@jcbt.org. [Click here](#) to apply.

The course consists of 12 days of field trips, together with on-site lectures, so that participants can engage directly with the land and the text of the Bible. Through exploration of the land, the participants will be better equipped for their consultant work and develop a deeper connection with the biblical text. This course is designed for Bible Translators, Bible Translation Consultants and Consultants-in-Training directly involved in the field of Bible translation. Arrival in Israel would be on Sunday 4 January 2026 and departure will be on Saturday 17 January 2026.

Ezekiel Book Workshop Nov 2025 - Murray Salisbury



This three-week online [Ezekiel book workshop](#) (part of the OneBook-at-a-Time series) will go from 24 Nov to 12 Dec 2025. Classes will be held Monday to Friday at 15:00 – 18:00 Israel time (13:00 – 16:00 UTC).

The course will be led by Murray Salisbury (in the photo), SIL translation consultant and long-time student and teacher of Biblical Hebrew Poetry. Also joining Murray will be Ronit Maoz, Israeli tour guide and specialist in biblical plants and cultures, and Chris Tachuck, SC translation consultant and Hebrew OT specialist.

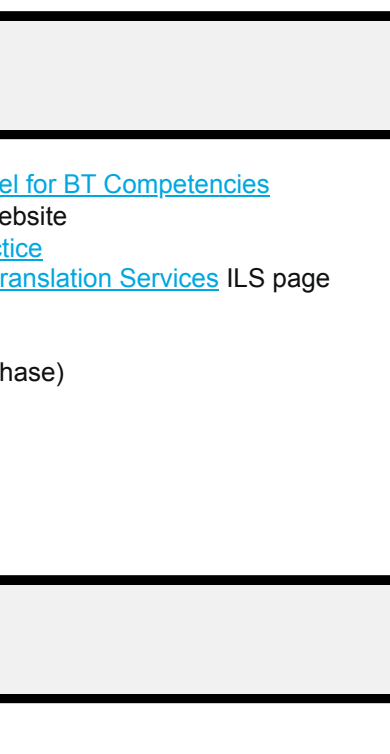
To get the most out of this course, you should have an intermediate-to-advanced level of Biblical Hebrew, as each day the students will prepare to read parts of Ezekiel in class with understanding and to answer the set questions. [Click here](#) to apply for this course. If you have further questions, email JCBT@jcbt.org.

The goal of this course is to equip you with tools of exegesis and of poetry analysis that will help you make informed decisions about the most likely meaning of difficult terms and verses in Ezekiel. Translating any poetic text is not easy. Translating Ezekiel has many additional challenges, such as the strange visions of other-worldly beings and of pagan practices (back in Jerusalem) – far away from Ezekiel in Babylon.

Other challenges include the rare terminology used to describe the restored temple (chapters 40-44). We will show you multiple pictures and videos – with labels – to help you visualize the various parts of the temple and how they connect to other parts. They will also clarify whether specific dimensions refer to an item's width, depth, or length.

We'll discuss the functions of Ezekiel's poetic devices and how these might point to his intended meaning. You will learn to examine the cultural, geographical, and historical contexts. This will help you apply much of what you learn to other Prophetic books and to other poetic parts of the Hebrew Bible.

An Emotion Exegesis Method for Bible Translators: Applied to Luke 24:1-12 - Josh Frost



Congratulations to [Josh Frost](#) on completion of his MA thesis at [Dallas International University \(DIU\)](#) titled, *An Emotion Exegesis Method for Bible Translators: Applied to Luke 24:1-12*.

Abstract - This thesis proposes a method for exegeting emotion in Scripture, drawing on widely accepted research in the interdisciplinary fields of emotion studies, linguistics, and translation theory. The method is designed to equip Bible translators with information necessary to portray the emotional dynamics of biblical texts accurately.

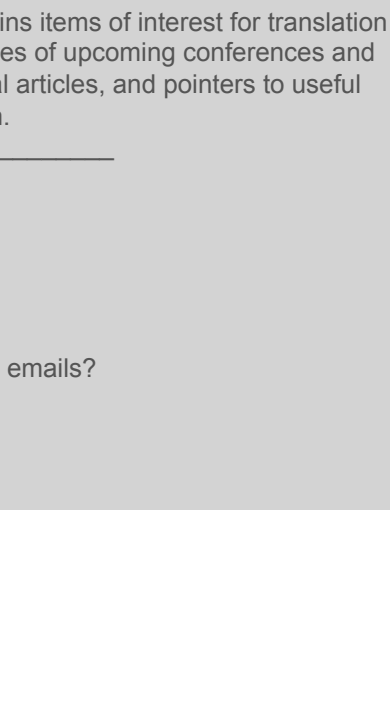
Seven theoretical perspectives, identified from contemporary emotion studies and contextualized for Bible translation, form the foundation for the rigorous exegesis method proposed. The method, which also includes producing summary exegetical resources, is, as applied to Luke 24:1-12 as a test case, the entire process demonstrating that exegeting the emotional dynamics of a passage necessitates understanding and synthesizing all other facets of meaning (e.g., setting, lexical choices, syntax, discourse, and other common exegetical inquiries). The results suggest the feasibility of quality emotion exegesis when conducted with an awareness of emotion theory, linguistics, and the biblical context.

Differences between Oral and Written English: A Case Study of Jonah - Christine Doi

Congratulations to [Christine Doi](#) (SIL Asia/Pacific) on completion of her MA thesis at [Dallas International University \(DIU\)](#) titled, *Differences between Oral and Written English: A Case Study of Jonah*, under the supervision of Heather Best.

Abstract - This thesis explores differences between spoken American English and written American English through a comparative analysis of two written translations of Jonah with an oral translation of Jonah. The author outlines research elements of analysis pertaining to the academic fields of orality studies, emotion studies, and prosody studies. Additional relevant elements regarding discourse analysis and contextual background of the source material are also covered. The author outlines the methodology of the analysis resulting in a two-part comparative analysis: a data analysis of features, and a qualitative analysis comparing the translations side-by-side. Included in both parts of the analysis are small-scale prosodic analyses of features of interest. The author observes, as a result from this analysis, differences in word and clause length, emotional coding, explicitation, and verb diversity among other findings. These findings contribute evidence to the discussion regarding differences between oral and written language.

New DIU Certificate in Bible Translation - George Payton



[Dallas International University](#) offers a number of translation programs to train translation people in the different roles in Bible Translation. Each program is geared toward preparing students for the role they plan to enter into. All these programs can be taken completely online.

We would be glad to help meet your training needs in Bible Translation. For more information on these programs, go to [Dallas International University's](#) Bible Translation in the DIU catalog. Email George.Payton or also email hlm@diu.edu.

New Certificate in Bible Translation - this program offers a condensed program that focuses on translation. Six (6) courses in translation and linguistics. For students who want to streamline their training on translation courses. Translation courses: Foundations of Translation, Theory and Practice, Translation Advising Applied Translation, Scripture Engagement, Oral Bible Translation, Linguistics, Morphosyntax.

• Graduate Certificate in Translation Consulting - 3-year mentoring program combining classroom with on-the-job training.

• MA in Translation Advising - Prepares translation facilitators to work with local translation teams. Combines translation courses with biblical languages and linguistics. 36 units, 2 years (full time).

• MA in Applied Linguistics with an emphasis in Bible Translation: our most popular program, combines linguistics, translation and biblical languages. For students anticipating working in language development and translation.

• MA in Translation from Dallas: Theological Seminary: this is a joint program between DIU and DTS. Linguistics and translation courses are taken at DIU, biblical languages, hermeneutics and theology taken at DTS. 60 units, degree awarded by DTS.

Coming Events

- 2026 - 10 January [Biblical Discourse Conference](#): DIU
- 2026 - 16-21 May [EMDO](#): Chiang Mai, Thailand
- 2026 - 15 Jan-24 July [Asia TCOW](#) (Translation Consultant Development Workshop). Email Angie.Foo for application.

Useful Links

- [Bible Translation Consultant Competencies / YouTube channel for BT Competencies](#)
- [International Scripture and Dictionary/Hebrew Bible Translation website](#)
- [SIL Senior Translation Consultants / BT Communities of Practice](#)
- [Email the SIL International Translation Office / International Translation Services](#) IL5 page
- [Join/visit the SIL Translation Resources](#)
- Visit the public [SIL.org/Translation](#) site
- [Free Translation Resources](#) (both free download and for purchase)
- [Journal of Translation](#)
- [Mentoring Matters website - Mentor Training Courses](#)
- [Consultant Development and Support Team](#)
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- [Kris Toler](#) - SIL Coordinator for Oral Translation Services
- [Viji Manjula](#) - Director, Global Consultant Pool
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This newsletter is produced by SIL Translation Services. It contains items of the list for translation personnel within SIL and related organizations. It includes notices of upcoming conferences and workshops, announcements of recent organizations, and journal articles, and pointers to useful information related to translation.

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