Subject Dec 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.

December 2025

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Complexity **- Phil King**

Over the past few weeks I've been immersed in a best-practices document for SIL's approach to translation, which has forced me to try to articulate—not just formally but personally—*why* we approach Bible translation the way we do. My personal conclusion is this: completing a trustworthy Bible translation that is useful for the Church's ministries of discipleship and evangelism is a *complex* task.

We are grateful to live in an era where producing a "translation" of *some* kind is easier than ever—AI can now generate a draft in seconds. However, using this (or any other process) to arrive at something trustworthy and useful is substantially more complex.

Note that this is 'complex' rather than 'complicated'. It's the complexity of multiple interconnected human relationships, community expectations, linguistic and cultural depth, exegetical care, and spiritual responsibility. My Google AI Overview offered this description of complex processes: *"a series of interconnected steps or events with many interdependent parts, branches, and decision points that often cannot be easily automated or broken down into a simple, linear sequence… requiring creativity, initiative, and advanced skills from human performers."* That feels remarkably close to what we experience in translation work.

The recent BT Conference illustrated this beautifully. The breadth of papers—from oral translation techniques to ethical cross-cultural engagement, from AI workflows to trauma-informed approaches—highlighted just how many interdependent perspectives are required, and how much creativity and initiative God has placed within the global translation community.

Much has been learned from studying complex systems like ant colonies, weather patterns or global financial markets. Some features of complexity are immediately recognisable in Bible translation:

Multiple variables: Complexity derives from multiple participants, teams, resources, goals and languages. A translation project involves translators, reviewers, church leaders, consultants, funders, and local communities—all with different hopes and pressures. Some may be motivated to save a language that the community is shifting away from, others to maximise 'chapter velocity' so that people can access God's Word as soon as possible, and yet others hope to see holistic community transformation. Across churches and communities there will also be different perspectives on which dialect to use, the style of translation (do we want something more literal or more meaning-based?), and whose theology should shape the translation of key terms. Navigating these different agendas requires deep listening and gracious dialogue. The Multilingual Assessment Tool (MAT) provides some help with this, not just exploring the complexity of multiple languages in a community, but also the different desires and goals for translation, as Maik Gibson explained in his paper at the BT Conference.

Unclear relationships: The connections between tasks are not always obvious. For example: funding strategies, quality assurance processes, linguistic research and capacity building have complex connections to one another which impact speed and trustworthiness, but also local ownership, use, and sustainability. Strengthening one area can create unanticipated results in another, which is why discernment and dialogue remain essential. Some of these relationships are explored in Jennifer Brassington's paper on prioritising community ownership, Stephen and Elisabeth Stringer's paper on 'widening the table' and Randy Groff's paper on 'parachute consulting'. What guidelines could help teams effectively navigate these relationships?

Non-linear effects: Causes and effects are not tidy. For example, AI-assisted drafting may save weeks of initial work, yet it creates new demands: teams need training in triaging AI errors and spotting subtle differences from the original, no matter how compelling the draft sounds. How do we affirm standards that embrace the sorts of boundaries between order and chaos that new technology invites? Eshinee Veith's presentation on AI ethics gave some helpful pointers to navigate between the hype and the risks.

Emergence and adaptive solutions: In truly complex work, the overall picture is more than the sum of the parts, and patterns emerge in unpredictable ways. A single detailed plan rarely survives contact with this reality. We regularly adjust our processes and strategies: to changes in available personnel and finances, shifts in language use, the development of new technology, changing preferences for oral or written communication, or community feedback. Adapting processes to new learning and changing situations is not failure but evidence of wisdom, so how can translation standards be framed in a way that leaves room for ongoing adaptation?

System-level understanding: Success can't be measured only at the verse level or at one stage of the process. It requires a whole-system view: How do funding strategies and training priorities shape long-term church ownership? How do members of global and local churches partner together effectively? What quality assurance processes are most likely to lead to products that are both useful and in use for discipleship and evangelism? In a complex process, no part thrives in isolation. How do we ensure our translation standards are framed by our understanding of the overall system?

And yet, even with all this complexity, I find myself encouraged. As well as the challenges, complexity represents a *richness.* It means that God has entrusted this work to the Body of Christ as a shared calling, not as a quick task for a few specialists or a machine. It means that translation is not merely produced but *formed* through the mutuality of relationships, prayer, discernment, and time.

As we continue exploring tools, refining practices, and collaborating across the global movement, let's keep celebrating both the gifts of technology and the irreplaceable value of people. And may we continue stewarding this complex calling with humility, courage, and joy—trusting that God is at work in every interdependent part of the process.

Recommended BT Conference 2025 Papers

Praise the Lord for a wonderful Bible Translation Conference 2025, held last month in Chiangmai, Thailand. There were over 700 participants, with 440 in-person attendees, representing 94 organizations and over 48 countries, with 139 presentations. These are some papers that caught the attention of the SIL translation Community of Leadership during the BT Conference. Each is followed by a quote from the paper or the translation team to give you a reason to catch up with the video.

- Martha Wade, AI Drafting of Scriptures: A Detailed Analysis of the Results in a Language in Papua New Guinea - *"Detailed examples of issues when using AI - could be helpful for training translators and advisors"*
- David Duncan et al A Study of Equivalence in Methods of Using AI-Generated Drafts in Bible Translation - *"Impressive research from Prescience Labs comparing manual drafting, directly-edited AI drafts (from Scripture Forge) and approaches using AI drafts as a resource. They analysed impact on consultant-recognised quality, speed, and internalisation by the teams. I was surprised by the results!"*
- Mark Wannemacher, Steve Doty, Different Models of Translation Projects for Different Language Group Capacities - *"Distinguishes different levels of capacity in translation projects and how much outside help they need"*
- Randy Groff Who is the Dumb Consultant Who Approved This? (Oh, It Was Me!) How Ethical is Parachute Consulting? - *"Randy Groff's paper challenged the use of "parachute consultants" = consultants that come in, check and leave (for teams without a TA). Really good!"*
- Manie van den Heever, Sacred Names, Sacred Choices: Ethical Dimensions in Translating Divine Names in the Hebrew Bible - *"Uses the case study of divine names to advocate for an expanded set of ethical standards (like the FOBAI statements), that could be adapted to each context"*
- Stephen Stringer and Elisabeth Stringer Widening the Table: An Ethics of Accessible Exegesis and Interpretation - *"Make exegetical materials widely accessible to translators and communities, not just to exegetical advisors. This means no pay wall, offline availability and oral exegetical materials."*
- John Samson Consultant Sign Language Training in SLBT: How Much is Enough? - *"Responses of the Deaf when using an interpreter because the consultant does not sign: disempowering, discouraging, slow. They feel the interpreter holds all the power."*
- Paul Kimbi, Aligning Translation Projects with Wycliffe Philosophy on Bible Translation: Bridging Impact - *"The Wycliffe Global Alliance Bible Translation Programs Philosophy (BTPP) doesn't set quality standards as such but provides a relational framework for Bible Translation. Quality is tied to sustainable, interdependent relationships rather than isolated technical benchmarks. The philosophy assumes that technical rigor will flow out of healthy partnerships and accountability structures. Shalom is the goal, projects need to be holistic."*

- Maik Gibson and Ken Decker, Insights from MAT Workshops Into Motivations for Bible Translation - Instruments or Symbols? - *"Do communities want the Bible as a symbol or an instrument? Maik showed the importance of MAT for teasing out difference between community desires to preserve language, and desires for the Bible to impact communities"*
- Eshinee Veith, Steering from Harm: Applying an Ethical Research Lens to AI and Bible Translation - *"Clear and simple set of ethical principles followed by guidelines for use of AI tools. The language of the basic ethical principles was super simple and should be helpful for discussing these issues for those with limited English"*
- James Cuenod, Word made flesh: Views of Translation through the lens of the Lord's supper - *"Objections to the use of AI in BT are sometimes based on theological considerations. Translation is seen as a kind of 'sacrament'. God is at work in the process, and this cannot be the case if AI does it. The paper claims that this idea is untenable, although there may be other reasons for rejecting the use of AI. The different theological views on the process of translation (divine, divine and human, human) is compared to different theological views on the Lord's supper."*
- Robin Rempel, Accessible, Persisting Bible Translation: Faster. Cheaper. Better. - *"Honey Bee OBT, an oral Bible translation workflow app with embedded exegetical helps for local language translators."*
- Mark Penny and Martin Hosken The Ethics of Metrics: Responsible Data Collection in Bible Translation Technology - *"David's collection of data for the census in 2 Samuel was not data God wanted him to have: collecting data is a discernment process."*
- Nathan Esala Responding to Language Death: An Emergent Interpretation of the Plant in Jonah 4 - *"Should we talk about language sleep rather than language death to avoid dooming languages to never come back? Translation viewed as pastoral and palliative care. Interesting tension regarding urgency: caring for vigorous languages vs caring for dying languages. Which to prioritize?"*
- Tricia Stringer A New Engagement: The Case for Ethical, Trauma-informed Bible Translation - *"Tricia's presentation on trauma-informed translation projects stresses the importance of dialogue in the process of project design and execution."*
- Cassie Weishaupt, Joshua Nemecek *More Than Machines: Human-Centered Ethics in AI in Bible Translation*
- Steve Watters, The Clash of the Ideals of the BT Strategy and the On-The-Ground Realities of Language Diversity - *"Research in the linguistic rainforest of Nepal about use of different languages in church - interesting tension between belief that Bible translations should exist in all languages, but the best language to use in church is Nepali (because of such complex multilingual communities). In at least half of churches they are using multiple languages in some of their contexts - worship songs, public Scripture reading, weekly Bible study. Need to remember that vernacular Scripture Use is not a simple binary opposition between use and non-use."*
- Paing Nan et al "Isn't Bible translation all done now?!": Tracking Activities and Needs Beyond ISO 639-3 - *"How can we say we are going to meet 2025 when we actually have no idea of the language realities in some places, as demonstrated from this presentation?"*
- Ian Lindsley, Theological Bias in AI-Generated and AI-Checked Translations: Ethical Implications
- Joel Brown Toward Resolving Ethical Dilemmas in the Construal of Divine Revelation - *"Possible ways forward to reconceptualise our understanding of revelation so that BT can mitigate hidden injustices and better affirm local ways of knowing"*
- NIkki Mustin and Ervais Fotso, Yes, You Can!: Listening to the Voice of the Community by Prioritizing Psalms in BT Projects - *"Many projects want the Psalms early in the life of a project, but the communities are often told no by project planners and funders. They are told to start with something else that is easier. However, the psalms' features resonate within an African oral culture context."*
- Andreas Ernst, Ethical Scripture Engagement: Six Questions Towards Good Stewardship - *"6 points that apply to ALL BT programs for Scripture Engagement. Regarding media, people want conversation (interaction) rather than consumption."*
- Daspit et al Is the Holy Ghost in the Machine? Ethical Considerations for Using AI in Bible Translation - *"Scripture Forge is designed to model and mimic the translators, being trained on their translations (as opposed to outside sources like with ChatGPT, etc). In that way, it's a servant to translator memory. It's not imposing from the outside, but reflecting translator decisions back to them from material they've already translated…. We are not called to automate mission, but embody it."*
- Freddy Boswell The Paraphrase: Where Ethics Meets Form, Theory, and Audience - *"Some people will call paraphrase translations unethical or unauthorized, but is a literal translation ethical if it needs paratextual materials and explanations?"*
- Kris Toler and Susan Toler, Breaking the Literate Bias: Exploring the Sufficiency of Oral Bible Translation - *"Less than half of the world's population know how to read… and literacy rates are falling. What are the implications?"*
- Linus Otronyi *Towards a Professional Code of Ethics in Bible Translation* - *"Interesting thoughts about a code of ethics - a hippocratic oath for translators (following Chesterman)?"*
- Chris Vaz Factors Affecting Transparency and Accountability of Translation Work in India - *"In the Indian context, relationship is more important than accountability. Partners are often reluctant to call another out. Mentors often don't give honest evaluations so as not to shame others. Sobering reflections on reality in this context of the BT movement"*
- Stephen Payne To Approve or Not? What Guides Consultants When They are Uncomfortable with the Text Before Them? - *"A sound translation will help shape theology - but theology should not dictate how the text is translated"*
- Judy Heath et al The Privilege of First Draft: Technical and Ethical Aspects of Using AI to Draft Scripture - *"Detailed discussion of errors from Scripture Forge implementation for AI drafting. She referred to working with AI as if working as a sculptor. Translators are then turned into fine tuners, only fine tuners"*

Algunos pensamientos surgidos de mi participación en Tailandia - **Dany Tasama**

(Consultor de Traducción de SIL Americas Region Sur)

De la conferencia: Respecto a la conferencia pude notar un interés evidente en la optimización de los recursos buscando reducir costos y tiempo en la producción de traducciones bíblicas y otros materiales relacionados. La búsqueda de dicha optimización se podría ver en algunos ejemplos: oralidad vs escritura, publicaciones digitales vs impresas, inteligencia artificial para elaborar borradores. Naturalmente que ajustar las prácticas de traducción de la Biblia a metodologías menos costosas y más rápidas hace surgir interrogantes respecto a los estándares de calidad, o la ética de la traducción como fue el tema de la conferencia.

Mi percepción es que los recursos modernos se deben aprovechar y son inevitables, pero debe haber un mínimo de innegociables para garantizar los estándares de calidad que demanda el trabajo de TB. Menciono algunos ejemplos: un mínimo entrenamiento para empezar, entrenamiento continuo al equipo, garantizar la cantidad de sesiones de consultoría/comprobación necesarias, extensiones de tiempo acordes al proyecto, la participación de un facilitador? y otros.

Considero que la necesidad de facilitadores para los proyectos de traducción debe ser un tema de mucho interés en SIL.

De las reuniones de líderes del área de traducción: Precisamente, uno de los puntos que llamaron mi atención fue la necesidad de facilitadores de traducción para los proyectos. Es sabido que la participación (o falta de participación) de facilitadores en los equipos, puede tener un impacto directo en los estándares de calidad de la traducción. Aunque son conocidas, menciono aquí algunas de las funciones que puede aportar un facilitador:

- Ayudar a los traductores en la internalización del texto, de modo que al momento de traducir haya más fluidez.
- Explicar elementos relacionados con los términos claves y acceder a recursos exegéticos para ayudar a los traductores a considerar las opciones.
- Interpretar lo que las notas del consultor quieren decir.
- Entrenar sobre funciones básicas de Paratext, Logos y otros.
- Orientar sobre el buen desarrollo de las comprobaciones en las comunidades.
- Un facilitador se convierte en un constante entrenador porque el equipo puede aprender de él a medida que va avanzando el proyecto.

En muchos casos los consultores están supliendo parcialmente la ausencia de un facilitador en los equipos haciendo facilitación durante las jornadas de consultoría. Infortunadamente, muchas veces cuando el consultor interviene, el borrador ya contiene muchos errores y a veces el tiempo de consultoría se convierte en tiempo de "re-traducción" (además del tiempo que ha tomado por parte de los traductores). Contar con un facilitador en el proceso de elaborar el borrador muy probablemente habría ayudado a evitar un número significativo de notas del consultor, lo que haría la jornada de consultoría mucho más efectiva.

Una de las razones de la escasez de facilitadores en los proyectos es la falta de fondos; desde lo que se puede observar, las entidades que proveen fondos no han visto como algo obligatorio la inclusión de un facilitador en los presupuestos de los proyectos. Paradójicamente, contar con un facilitador podría ayudar a ahorrar dinero estando más cerca de cumplir con los tiempos del proyecto, evitando invertir recursos extras para hacer nuevas comprobaciones debido a los muchos cambios en la traducción, aprovechando mejor las jornadas de consultoría y (quizás lo más importante) velando por la calidad de la traducción desde el momento mismo de la producción del borrador.

Some thoughts from my time in Thailand

- Dany Tasama *(Translation Consultant, SIL Americas Southern Region)*

From the conference: Regarding the conference, I noticed a clear interest in optimizing resources by seeking to reduce costs and time in the production of Bible translations and other related materials. This pursuit of optimization could be seen in some examples: oral versus written translations, digital versus printed publications, and artificial intelligence for drafting. Naturally, adapting Bible translation practices to less expensive and faster methodologies raises questions about quality standards and the ethics of translation, as was the topic of the conference.

My perception is that modern resources should be leveraged and are inevitable, but there must be a minimum of non-negotiable requirements to guarantee the quality standards that translation work demands. Some examples include: a minimum basic initial training, ongoing team training, ensuring the necessary number of consulting/checking sessions, time extensions appropriate to the project, the participation of a facilitator, and others.

I believe that the need for facilitators for translation projects should be a topic of great interest to SIL.

From the translation team leaders' meetings: One of the points that caught my attention was precisely the need for translation facilitators for projects. It is well known that the participation (or lack thereof) of facilitators on teams can have a direct impact on translation quality standards. Although these are common knowledge, I will mention here some of the functions that a facilitator can contribute:

- To help translators internalize the text, so that their translation process is more fluid.
- To explain elements related to key terms and provide access to exegetical resources to help translators consider their options.
- To interpret the consultant's notes.
- To train on basic functions of Paratext, Logos, and other tools.
- To guide the team on the effective development of community checks.
- A facilitator becomes a continuous coach because the team can learn from him/ her as the project progresses.

In many cases, consultants are partially compensating for the absence of a facilitator on the teams by facilitating the translation during the consultation sessions themselves. Unfortunately, by the time the consultant intervenes, the draft already contains numerous errors, and sometimes the consultation time becomes time spent on "re-translation" (in addition to the time already taken by the translators). Having a facilitator during the drafting process would very likely have helped avoid a significant number of consultant notes, making the consultation session much more effective.

One of the reasons for the shortage of facilitators in projects is the lack of funding; it appears that funding agencies have not considered the inclusion of a facilitator in project budgets to be mandatory. Paradoxically, having a facilitator could help save money by keeping the project on track to meet project deadlines, avoiding investing extra resources to make new checks due to the many changes in the translation, making better use of consulting days and (perhaps most importantly) ensuring the quality of the translation from the initial draft.

ETEN Summit November 2025 (Orlando) - Angie Foo

The theme of this year's ETEN Summit was "***Acceler8***." From SIL Global, there were 21 of us participating, including Johnstone Ndunde (Executive Director). The goal of the ETEN Alliance is to eradicate Bible poverty: *to see all people gain access to God's Word in a language they can clearly understand by 2033.*

As a first time attendee of the ETEN Summit, I appreciated hearing from the funders and seeing the ways in which they are trying to align resources with needs.

There was a range of creative approaches to applying technology, some promising and others still emerging. It was also nice to see SIL recognized for the ways we have contributed and collaborated with others. Most importantly, the emphasis on prayer was encouraging and helped to remind everyone that ultimately everything is in God's hands.

The ETEN Alliance consists of 5 resource partners and 11 implementing partners: American Bible Society, United Bible Societies, Biblica, Deaf Bible Society, Lutheran Bible Translators, Pioneer Bible Translators, Seed Company, The Word For The World, unfoldingWord, Wycliffe Bible Translators USA, and SIL Global.

ETEN has four initiatives that they have discovered significantly contribute to acceleration: Affinity Tables (the 55 Table, focusing on Sign Language translation and the Oral Bible Translation table), the Innovation Lab, Prayer, and Data Sharpening (including Progress.Bible and Rev79). There are also two Working Groups, one focused on Field Strategy and one focused on Technology Strategy.

These are some of my notes from my four days at the Summit:

Day 1: Collaborate - Vision 2025 was a catalyst for the 2033 All Access Goals. There has been a shift from organization driven to a movement based on collaboration.

Day 2: Innovate - Updates from the Affinity Tables. The 55 table: Sign Language access has increased significantly. "In the past 3 years, the number of verses published was equal to all history prior." To date, there are 91 SL projects ongoing and 1 Full Bible completed. The OBT table. The goal is to meet the translation targets for 2000 oral Bibleless languages by 2033.

Workshops and breakout rooms included:

- DBL Next – Information about the relaunched Digital Bible Library platform.
- Language Data – Translation technology and language data.
- How to Apply Technology to Translation – how technology can support translation especially in sensitive contexts.
- DBS MEET (Mobilize and Engage Effective Translation) – project management to meet deaf communities where they are at.
- SLTT – Sign Language Translation Tool.

Day 3: Accelerate - Mainly focused on AI. Developing a strategy to address the AAG's at risk groups – at the current pace, we will reach the All Access Goals in 2041. This is a pace gap of 8 years that needs to be narrowed. ETEN's steering committee identified 3 elements of innovation: (1) AI-Assisted translation, (2) Church-Based Bible Translation, and (3) Multimodal / Oral-First Translation. Tools were introduced to support this innovation, at various stages of exploration: BT Servant (Unfolding Word, this is a WhatsApp based chatbot to address BT questions which then can pass you on to a real person if it gets stuck), Fluent and Vachan Engine (Bridge Connectivity Solutions - designed to accelerate text and oral Bible translation). The Keynote Dinner speaker was Bobby Gruenewald, the CEO of YouVersion.

Day 4: Anticipate - Future Casting and Q&A Panel with Implementation leaders. The Visionary Milestones are that, by 2026, there will be 250 new starts, 500 AAG completions, and 6,000 average chapters per month. The number one strategy is PRAYER.

Here are some takeaways/ highlights of this ETEN Summit from others attending.

Mark Woodward (*SIL Global Director of AI Engineering*) - While the goals focus on accelerating progress toward timely Scripture access, I was encouraged by the strong emphasis on their catalytic purpose - fostering deeper collaboration, innovation, and the central role of the church and language communities in everything we do.

I was proud to see how SIL's contribution to this vision was appreciated - both on the main stage, through recognition of Paratext, Rev79, Scripture Forge, ProgressBible, and others, and in conversations with partners, who highlighted the relationships, tools, and collaboration that continue to build trust and strengthen partnership.

At the same time, the summit was a good reminder that we have much to learn from others - organizations that may work differently but share the same heart and vision. My main takeaway is that God is at work through this diverse alliance, and as we come together, we're able not only to bring our unique strengths but also to grow through partnership, humility, and shared purpose.

JoEllen Magnus (*SIL Global Business Analyst*) - Being in person at the ETEN Summit allowed me to experience and appreciate the collaboration and partnership among Bible Translation organizations. It's a beautiful picture of the unity in the body of Christ, challenging and imperfect but growing. I'm thankful for the opportunity to build relationships in person that will help me lean into that collaboration during the rest of the year.

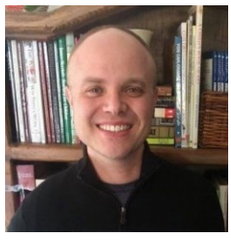
Steve Watters (*SIL Global Chief Research Officer*) - I was first introduced to the idea of "collective impact alliance" several years ago. The idea is appealing: no one organization has the silver bullet that will solve difficult social issues (e.g., homelessness, human trafficking), but collectively, many organizations with a common vision will likely get much further.

This last week I witnessed such an effort in the form of ETEN, and the alliance it has formed around solving what it has termed the problem of "Bible poverty." As a first time attendee to their annual summit, I was impressed by the professionalism and attention to detail from personalization of conference "merch" to high-tech AV to really tasty food. Many of the reports on progress were dizzying--unprecedented numbers of new project starts, never-before-seen pace of chapters being completed each month, more people than ever before praying for BT, more money raised, new shiny translation tools that help the translator, etc.

While I left the summit with more questions and wonderings than I went in with, it was clear that the American businessmen who have organized the alliance are serious--they are out to meet their goals, and they will steer the ship in such a way as to get there. As a networking opportunity, it proved quite fruitful: many good conversations, several potential collaborations for research, an invitation to apply for funding, and an invitation to contribute to the ETEN Innovations Lab.

But, without a doubt, the highlight for me was that I got to room with my brother Daniel with whom I share many core values, but who now occupies a very different space than me in the BT organizational ecosystem. We share our own alliance that's invaluable. So, while ETEN is an alliance with its own particular goals, these are understood as only catalytic (in ETEN's own words); the bigger picture is that there are many alliances within, and it's all those individual and organizational nodes connecting with each other in numerous arrangements that provide the fuller, and more holistic alliance, of God's inexorable purposes being fulfilled, in spite of ourselves.

Multimodality CoP - Kris Toler



In November we had another session of the *Multimodal Bible Translation Community of Practice*. Heather Beal (DIU) explored the three interconnected elements of oral Bible translation: internalization, emotion exegesis, and performance. These three elements form a deepening spiral where each element informs and strengthens the others. It was a fascinating presentation and led to good engagement and discussion afterwards.

The recording of Heather's presentation is now available on the EMDC website. If you were not able to join the session, you will definitely want to watch the recording. The PowerPoint and the video recording can be found under the "From Our Library" section on this page.

Next month's CoP session will be on December 9th at 15:00 UTC - 9:00am Dallas, 15:00 UK, 20:30 India, 22:00 Thailand with Ervais Fotso from Scriptura sharing "Instructional Information in Oral Bible Translation". Join us for a thought-provoking Community of Practice session exploring how "instructional information" — everything from punctuation and headings to study notes, maps, and digital aids — shapes the way people access and understand the Bible, and what this means for Oral Bible Translation. Drawing on Ervais Fotso's recent research, we'll examine the history and purpose of these additions, the interpretive risks they introduce, and the new opportunities OBT offers to create oral-appropriate forms of guidance for listeners.

We are starting an OBT reading group in January. We will select an article or book related to OBT that everyone can read and then come together to discuss. If you are interested in participating in the reading group please feel free to email me and I will add you to the list. I will be sending out a message soon with the selected article for the first session. I hope it will generate good discussion and deepen our understanding of this important topic.

I also want to let you know that we are starting a Multimodal Bible Translation Community of Practice in Spanish. I will send out more information soon once the details are finalized. If you are interested in participating, please feel free to write to me and I will add you to the mailing list.

New Translation Consultants

Thiadora Kantjai - *AsiaPacific*

KETERANGAN KEAHLIAN

SIL Asia menyatakan bahwa
pada tanggal 21 Nopember 2025

Arini Thiadora Ranindaya Kantjai

sudah memenuhi segala persyaratan SIL Global
untuk melayani sebagai

Konsultan Penerjemahan

Angeline Foo dan Stephen Doty, PhD
Atas Nama Tim Koordinator Penerjemahan Alkitab Asia

SIL

Congratulations to Thiadora Kantjai (Indonesia) working with Kartidaya, on completing all requirements for certification as a Translation Consultant. Her primary mentors were Yunita Susanto, Roger Hanna, and Bryan Hinton. Her supervisor, Ismarujati (Kartidaya Head of BT Operation), has approved her application and the Asia Bible Translation Coordination Team has verified that she is a qualified Translation Consultant, able to work independently with teams. She successfully completed the LPKP (Indonesian Consultant Training Course) in August 2023.

Thiadora is a Central Sulawesi Christian Church (GKST) pastor, and her church commissioned her to serve with Kartidaya Sahabat Indonesia starting in June 2018. She completed postgraduate studies in New Testament Theology in 2017 at Duta Wacana Christian University in Yogyakarta. She is fluent in Indonesian, English, and also her mother tongue, Pamona.

In August 2018 she started as a translation facilitator-in-training with the Balangin people in West Kalimantan, and then in November 2018 she continued serving as the translation facilitator for the Punan language in North Kalimantan for an orthography workshop. Then she was the translation facilitator (2019–2022) with the Luwu Tae' community (South Sulawesi) for the translation of the Gospel of Luke and the Jesus Film.

In November 2022, Thiadora became a cluster leader and facilitator mentor for an Oral Bible translation in Central Sulawesi: one language under the OBT program and two languages under the OBS program. The OBS program ended in June 2025, while the OBT program is still in progress. From March 2025 until now, she has also been serving as a cluster leader for the continued translation of the Old Testament in four languages and the New Testament in two languages of Central Sulawesi. From 2021 until today, she has also served in Survey ToT (Taste of Translation) as a survey facilitator and as a consultant for trial translation checks in the regions of Kalimantan, East Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, and Papua.

Interviews with Translation Consultants

We asked experienced Translation Consultant, Anne Kompaore, to share her thoughts concerning her work and philosophy of ministry. Anne currently works with ANTBA (Association National pour la Traduction de la Bible et L'Alphabetisation) in Burkina Faso, a Wycliffe Global Alliance organization. Over her career she has served with the Mennonite Church, ANTBA, SIL Burkina, Burkina Bible Society, Seed Company, and other Bible translation organizations.

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.

Anne Kompaore - *Africa (ANTBA)*

How did you get interested in Bible translation?
In 1975-76, I went to Zaire (now DRC) to serve as a volunteer teacher to missionary kids. I lived next door to the national Bible translator of the Giphende language, who had also been assigned to tutor me in the basics of his language. I was fascinated with the language structure. During my short 10 month stay, I had the opportunity to visit four Bible translation teams. On the third visit, I was told that Bible translation was the most wonderful vocation that one could be engaged in.

At the fourth team in the capital city of Kinshasa, I asked the Bible translation consultant what was required to become a consultant. John Ellington (Bible Society) explained - a PhD in either Linguistics, Bible, or Anthropology, and a good grounding in the other two. That was a little awesome for a 21 year old who did not yet have her BA. Nonetheless, the seed was planted, and I decided to major in Linguistics at University.

What is your consulting philosophy? The basic tasks of consultants are training and quality assurance, buttered with a good dose of encouragement. I try to help the translation teams to find their own errors, and to build up their capacities, providing tools and resources as needed, right within the checking session.

What translation resources do you really value? I don't know that I have a special preferred translation resource. All the manuals, Paratext with its dictionaries, Logos Bible Software resources, which includes Translator's Workplace, Bible versions, Hebrew/Greek interlinear, the interlinearizer. The interlinearizer helps me take a peek directly into the language.

How do you continue to grow as a consultant? Working in a variety of settings with new languages, translators with a variety of personalities, and different organizations. It pushes me to learn and adapt to each new situation. As I work with a team, whenever I encounter a translation that does not fit my expectations, I explore the exegesis, inquire about the language structure and semantics of the receptor language, and as needed, pursue further research on the meaning in the source language. In some cases, I write up my findings and share it with others.

How do you share your translation discoveries with others? MAP Online, Academia.edu, translation conferences, workshops, and simply sharing my resources with thumb drives. In addition to developing my own resources (Bible background, Hebrew Discourse Analysis), I also have had the privilege of making a contribution to resources being developed for Bible translators: Semantic Dictionary of Semantic Domains (SDBH), Key Terms of the Old Testament (KTOT) and Translators Notes.

Can you share about a time when you realized you were wrong and what you learned from it? I have occasionally realized that I gave wrong advice to a team, or that I have found that I have missed something important while checking. This quite upsets me when I find out, but I do share it with the team right away, and we work at improving the translation together. I found very early that no single consultant catches everything in a translation, even the most seasoned. And each consultant has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. It is so important to have humble collaboration.

What are your top tips for someone starting on a career path in Bible translation? My road to becoming a translation consultant was very long and rugged. What kept the vision before me was the deep conviction of the Lord's call for me to be a translation consultant some day. Don't jump for the opportunity simply for status, etc. Be sure of the Lord's call, because it is that conviction that will keep you when the rough times come.

Share something that you learned from a mentor or from a mentee? One of my mentors (Krijn van der Jagt, Bible Society) told me - if a team is well trained in understanding the Scriptures, they will more likely produce a good Bible translation. Technique in Bible translation is of little effect, if the translator does not fully understand the text to translate. This has been my guide in resource development ever since, to help translators understand the text before them.

What do you see as the place of the church in Bible translation? Contexts are so many and varied that it would be difficult to make a single statement about the matter here. Where there is a church, and as much as they can be part of the translation process the better. They are the motor that moves it ahead, decision making, financial input, technical expertise, etc. There are more and more cases where expertise is being built up within language groups. I think though it is a false division to make between Bible translation organizations and "Church", especially when the organization is a national organization, and the experts are members of the churches whose languages are involved in Bible translation. This is how things are, here in Burkina Faso. Church members are part of the board (of ANTBA), and our consultants and exegetes are pastors of churches and teachers in Bible institutions.

What would you say to young/aspiring translators? Be sure of God's call in your life. That will take you through all the highs and lows of the profession. And He will lead the way.

Any other comments? I want to thank the Lord for two people who did not let my dream die. First of all my husband, Daniel Kompaoré, who, as the first director of ANTBA sent me to my first consultant training, directed by none other than Dr Katy Barnwell, in Côte d'Ivoire (circa 1996). I had become content as a linguistics consultant, Daniel pushed me to nurture my dream. And then fifteen years later when my efforts to become a consultant seemed to have met a dead end, Katy invited me to help out in Nigeria, and the rest is history.

Amazing Stories of Bible Translators

Pandita Ramabai - A pioneer Bible translator (1858-1922)

Thanks to David Morgan for this amazing story posted on the Wycliffe UK website.

Rama Dongre, later known as Pandita Ramabai, was born in India in 1858 into a Marathi-speaking family, belonging to the priestly Brahmin caste. There were no schools for girls but, most unusually, both her parents gave her a thorough education in the Sanskrit language.

She learned Hebrew and Greek and worked on a translation into Marathi. A translation into Marathi had already been completed in the early 19th century. There had been subsequent revisions too. But Ramabai thought that these translations relied too heavily on Sanskrit words and phrases; they did not speak to women of lower castes. Her translation had a specific audience: uneducated women of lower castes. Ramabai died in 1922, just as she completed the final checking of her translation.

Her life story is as remarkable as any in the history of Bible translation. And her translation of the Bible into Marathi as spoken by lower-caste women is utterly inspirational.

Intellectually brilliant, Ramabai was deeply familiar with suffering, hardship and opposition. Her life journey with its gradual discovery of Christ is heart-warming. The constant in her life was the quest for social justice for low-caste women. Only in her discovery of Christ did that quest find fulfilment. How fitting then that all this climaxed at the end of her life in a Bible translation that was crafted for an audience that others had considered not worth the bother.

Poh San Kwan - Translation Consultant

Thanks to Christine Leow for this amazing story in the November 7, 2025 issue of Salt&Light (Singapore).

Poh San spent over 20 years in Papua New Guinea translating the Bible so God could speak to the locals in their heart language. This December, she turns 81. More than half her life – 45 years – was dedicated to the mission field where she was a Bible translator.

Those were not decades spent solely behind typewriters or computers. Instead, she lived amongst the locals, soaking up their culture to better translate God's Word into their vernacular.

Her body bears the marks of her days on the mission field – lungs that only function at 60% capacity because of long-term untreated asthma, a permanently blackened toe crushed during a motorcycle accident, a scar on her thumb from a slip of a machete that cut so deep, bone could be seen.

Ms Kwan was 28 when she enrolled in Singapore Bible College (SBC) to earn a Bachelor in Theology, and in her second year, the Lord confirmed to her that she should be a Bible translator. It was at SBC that she learned about Wycliffe Bible Translators, having chanced upon their magazine at the library there. After completing SBC, she joined Wycliffe and left Singapore to be a Bible translator in Papua New Guinea (PNG). After 18 years, completed the New Testament with the Mauwake people, one of the more than 800 languages in PNG.

In the 1980s, on top of the translation work, Ms Kwan became a translation consultant. Training local translators and other translators became part of her ministry as well. In 2001, she left PNG, a place she had called home for 24 years. By then, she was in her 50s.

No one would have blamed her if she had retired. Instead, she spent the next 20 years in East Asia working as a translation consultant. In 2019, she returned to Singapore but still continued her work. She only retired two weeks before the Salt&Light interview.

AI & Translation Spot

AI in Bible Translation - *Greg Dekker*

(Director of Strategic Language Applications)

It seems artificial Intelligence (AI) has touched or is in the process of impacting most everything in our lives these days, from medical procedures to note-taking, from investing to information gathering, and more.

As I'm writing, I think of the Scripture in Luke 16:8, 'For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.' (NIV)

Missionally, it behooves us to consider how technological innovation can assist us in reaching our world for Christ. We need to be shrewd and wise in applying technology to accomplishing foundational missional work, such as Bible translation.

Click here to read the full article in the Lausanne Global Analysis "AI Ethics & The Great Commission" (November 2025) issue.

Research Corner

Scripture Engagement Research Initiative - *Tim Hatcher*

Tim Hatcher (DIU) announced the Scripture Engagement Research Initiative, which presents findings from a statistical analysis of factors influencing Scripture Engagement in 70 projects worldwide, representing different organizations and cultural and religious contexts. This is the first research published by the *Scripture Engagement Research Initiative* at Dallas International University. Please feel free to share this report with anyone, and visit the scriptureimpact.org website for additional resources.

These are the six key findings. Click here to see the full report.

Theological Mismatches: The research found that a significant number of host communities held theological views about vernacular Bible translation that were different from those held by Bible agencies and/or funding agencies, and these differing theological views about the Bible, Bible translation, and ecclesiology led to low levels of use or no use of Bible translations. This problem has been remedied in many translation programs through transparent dialogue between Bible agencies and local stakeholders about goals and theological perspectives related to mother tongue Bible translation.

The Effectiveness of Arts Strategies: Programs that had active arts strategies had higher levels of use than those that did not. Arts strategies are statistically tied with the other five top scoring factors; it is just as influential as ownership, theological issues, and contextualization. The positive effect of using local arts on the level of use was present in both Christian societies and in resistant, non-Christian contexts.

Centrality of Local Ownership: Three of the six top factors were related to local ownership: ownership, partnership with church leaders and leaders of other missions, and Bible agencies maintaining a servanthood ethos. This reinforces the long-held idea in Scripture Engagement that local ownership is essential to the proper functioning of all other factors. Without local ownership, an otherwise excellent Bible translation is less likely to be used.

Limitations of Ownership: One of the unexpected findings in this data set was programs that scored well on local ownership but still had minimal levels of use of mother tongue Scriptures. One third of the projects that scored high on local ownership had very low levels of use or no use. This demonstrates that local ownership alone is not enough to guarantee a successful Bible translation program. Other deficiencies—like unaddressed multilingualism, unaddressed theological concerns about the translation, using an inaccessible modality (or inaccessible media), poor distribution, lack of contextualization, etc.—negatively influenced the outcomes of the Bible translation program even when local ownership scored high. This does not suggest that local ownership is unimportant; it is primary. Rather, it suggests that a too-limited view of what constitutes local ownership can be counterproductive. In other words, a program cannot be successful without high levels of local ownership, but there are other Scripture Engagement elements in addition to ownership that must be in place for a program to be successful.

Contextualization Strategies: Contextualization strategies correlated to high levels of use of vernacular Bible translations in resistant, non-Christian contexts. Conversely, Bible translation projects in resistant, non-Christian contexts that eschewed contextualization strategies correlated to low levels of use or no use. Different teams used various contextualization approaches including Christian versions of life cycle rituals, local music and dress, contextualized evangelism, and others.

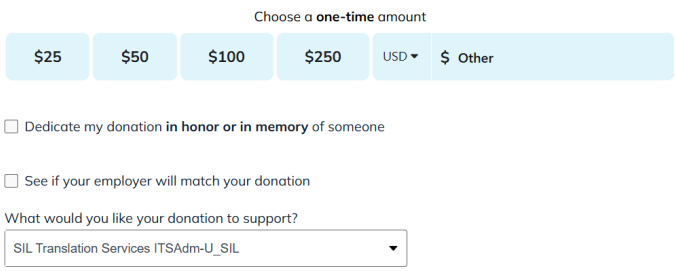
Orality and Modality Ecosystems: Orality did not rank in the top tier of factors but was the next highest scoring factor following the tied top six factors. This was due to the fact that oral strategies and media strategies were measured as discrete factors. Thus, electronically-mediated, secondary orality was not counted toward the "orality score." When oral strategies and media strategies are combined as "aural strategies," they do rank in the top tier. One of the more consistent findings was that orality tended to score higher in combination with other modalities, not independent of them. This suggests rich ecosystems of modalities are often more effective than single modality approaches.

News

Donate To SIL Translation Services *- new SIL giving page*

SIL has now provided a way for individuals to donate directly to SIL Translation Services. When you click on this link, the SIL Giving page opens with the Netsuite Key "ITS Adm-U_SIL" already in the drop down menu.

Giving through this link will enable us to continue providing quality translation resources, such as Translator's Notes, Exegetical Summaries, Alpha with Angela, and the Journal of Translation, as well as providing consultant support and training workshops to the broader Bible Translation movement.



Paratext Update - Matt Toulmin

There has been exciting news coming out of the Paratext team lately—we wanted to take this opportunity to update you on the changes that have been happening.

Starting with an external review in Spring-Summer 2025, the leadership team from UBS and SIL took the recommendations and made changes to the structure of Paratext, starting with new governance and leadership of the team.

An immediate board was created consisting of two UBS representatives (Patrick Van de Grift and Adrian White) and two from SIL (Christy Liner and Matt Toulmin). The board appointed Eleanor Berry, Associate to AED for Central Services, as interim Paratext Director to lead the team during this time of change.

During August and September, Eleanor and the Board, along with the Paratext leadership team, worked together to create a unified organizational structure. Their goal was, and continues to be, unifying the Paratext team under one unit – which also involves moving the SIL component out of the Language Technology Department in SIL, and the UBS component out of where it was housed in UBS. As the team continued to move forward, Matt Toulmin was asked by the Paratext Board, and accepted the offer, to serve as Paratext Director.

Under Matt's leadership, the team is moving forward in unity and towards clarity of our plan for 2026 and beyond: (1) For Paratext 9, we are working on incremental improvements, patches and bug fixes. (2) We are in the midst of a joint process with ETEN, involving significant consultation on the future direction for Paratext 10 in particular. We appreciate prayer for God to lead us in unity together, through this process.

We are committed to listening and learning, so that Paratext continues to be trusted by, and effective for, the Bible Translation movement for decades to come.

The Bible Translator journal celebrates 75 years - Drew Maust

Volume 76, Issue 2 (August 2025) of *The Bible Translator* (*TBT*) celebrates seventy-five years since the first issue, edited by Eugene A. Nida appreared in 1950. *TBT*'s managing editor, Jeffrey Green, wrote an up-to-date record of its history, some of the changes the journal has been through, and the many things that have stayed the same.

The editors of *JOT* (Journal of Translation), Freddy Boswell and Drew Maust, wrote a congratulations piece on behalf of SIL and JOT, which you can read here - just scroll down almost to the bottom.

Thanks to the generosity of UBS, *all* issues of *TBT* are now available digitally free of charge to SIL staff, and issues published over five years ago are available to all here.

Ethics in Bible Translation Virtual Issue - Phil King

This Virtual Issue, Ethics in Bible Translation, of the Bible Translator was written to accompany the 2025 Bible Translation Conference. It collects some illustrative previous articles that connect with the conference subthemes: ethics of people and communities, ethics of interpretation and exegesis, and ethics of technology, processes, finances, and leadership.

It includes both papers that offer a more general philosophical foundation and those that explore ethical issues in specific case studies, with the aim of providing a helpful basis for discussions.

This collection of papers only begins to reveal some of the many ethical challenges involved in Bible translation today, but it provides an introduction to some of the key themes that were developed further in the conference itself. We look forward, in turn, to future issues of *The Bible Translator*, which will hopefully themselves be influenced by discussions at the conference.

Render 3 Newsletter
- Faith Comes By Hearing

Faith Comes By Hearing has launched a Render 3 Newsletter. In this first edition of the newsletter, they give an overview of updates in version 3.12 of Render, resources such as training courses and all the ways to get connected and stay informed of what is happening with Render. You can get signed up for the Newsletter by contacting the *Render Software Ambassador*, Louis Rose at lrose@fcbhmail.org.

Oral Translation Consultant Workshop (Sep 2026) - Evelyn Gan

Evelyn Gan (*Consultant for Oral Translation Programmes, Wycliffe Global Alliance*) announced an Oral Translation Consultant training workshop will be held next year (14-25 September 2026) in Johannesburg, South Africa.

This workshop is for orality practitioners who are consultants-in-training. Specifically, it is for exegetes/ translation facilitators or mother tongue translators who have already been involved in oral projects, either storying or OBT.

If your organization has members who meet this criteria and are interested in being part of this training, please have them fill in this form Expression of Interest by 30 January 2026. This is NOT the registration form but provides your expression of interest in participating in the workshop. Please be aware that participants will be responsible for travel expenses to the workshop.

Prerequisites are: (1) Have at least two consultants provide a recommendation that you should attend this training. (2) You have been involved in the translation of at least one set of oral stories (minimum 30 stories/ passages) as a facilitator/ exegete/ translation advisor OR at least one book as a facilitator/ exegete/ translation advisor.

BT Glossary - Drew Maust

Email Drew Maust to contribute additions to the BT (Bible Translation) Glossary which is on the MAP website. This Bible Translation (BT) Glossary defines abbreviations in the field of Bible translation, including organizations, initiatives, approaches, resources, and tools.

You can also check out: ETEN Innovation Lab Glossary / tools Glossaries of Linguistics Terms (SIL) / OT Glossary (David Gray) / Wycliffe Global Alliance organizations

Coming Events

- 2025 - 9 December. Multimodal Bible Translation CoP. Email Kris Toler
- 2026 - 10 January. Biblical Discourse Conference. DIU
- 2026 - 18-21 May. EMDC. Chiangmai, Thailand.
- 2026 - 15 Jun-24 July. Asia TCDW (Translation Consultant Development Workshop). Email Angie Foo for application.
- 2026 - 14-25 September. Oral Translation Consultant Workshop. Johannesburg, South Africa

Useful Links

- Donate to SIL Translation Services / BT Glossary
- Bible Translation Consultant Competencies / YouTube channel for BT Competencies
- Linguistic Standards and Deliverables for Bible Translation website
- SIL Senior Translation Consultants / BT Communities of Practice
- 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)
- 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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- Phil King - *ITS Director*
- 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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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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