

Broadcast 11 – Interview: Checking Steps 5 & 6

MARA:

Greetings! This is Mara. I am happy to be with you again this week. We are going to be learning more about the **MAST** method of translation, which means **Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation**. This has been very helpful to me as a newer translator on our team. For the last few weeks, we have been hearing about the importance of accountability and checking in Bible translation. Today, we have a guest with us. We have invited one of the translators, John, to learn about his experiences with two of the checking steps of the MAST process. We are going to focus on steps five and six, which are **SELF-EDIT** and **PEER-EDIT**. Welcome John. Thank you for coming and sharing with us today.

JOHN:

Thank you, Mara. It is good to be with you today. Congratulations to you for becoming a translator! I hope that sharing my experiences with these two checking steps will help and encourage you and others.

MARA:

Before we start talking about the checking steps, please tell us a little about yourself. How did you become part of the translation team?

JOHN:

I had heard about ordinary people like me being involved in Bible translation. I never met anyone who had been involved with it, though. Then I was visiting a friend. He is also a Christian, so on Sunday morning we went to his church. It was the day that a team from his church brought back the book of Mark that they had recently translated into their mother-tongue language. It was such a time of celebration for the congregation! I felt that God had arranged for me to be with my friend at his church on that specific day, so I could see the joyous effect on the people of hearing Scripture in their mother-tongue language. There was a celebration after church with songs and special food. I had an opportunity to talk with some of the translators. That made me more interested and increased my confidence that someone like me could be involved.

MARA:

It sounds like that was a very special time. What happened next?

JOHN:

When I got home, I talked with my pastor. He had some doubts about the translation process and using ordinary people. He always had been told that translation needs to be done by theologians who can go back to the original sources in Greek and Hebrew. I shared with him what I had experienced at my friend's church. I think that made him more open to the idea. A few weeks later, he told me that he had heard about a translation event for our mother-tongue language. He asked if I wanted to attend. I was very excited and made the necessary arrangements. The pastor let me have some

time to talk with our congregation and explain that we could translate Scripture into our mother-tongue language. Four other members of our church and our pastor were able to go to the translation event with me. Our team has completed translating the book of Mark. We are continuing our work with the goal of having the New Testament in our mother-tongue language completed next year.

MARA:

That is wonderful. Yes, it seems that God had you at that church service on that day, so you were ready to accept His call to attend the translation event. I am sure that you have many things to share from that experience. What we would like to do today is to talk now about your experiences with steps five and six of the **MAST** translation method. Those are the first two checking steps. Step five is **SELF-EDIT**. How would you explain that step?

JOHN:

As you know, there is a lot of work that happens before we get to the checking steps. First read, or **CONSUME**, the chapter you are working on. Then **VERBALIZE** the chapter in your mother-tongue language. Then **CHUNK** the chapter into smaller portions and then write or type the **BLIND DRAFT** of each chunk from memory with your Bible closed.

MARA:

After all that work, why is the **SELF-EDIT** necessary?

JOHN:

The purpose of the **SELF-EDIT** is to check your own blind draft against the Bible that you are using as a source text. It is to be sure that you have included the important ideas and words and that your blind draft is accurate and sounds natural as you read it.

MARA:

When you say that you are checking for accuracy, what does that mean? Some of our listeners may wonder if you need to be sure you have translated every word from the national language and not left anything out.

JOHN:

Yes, Mara, that is a question that many translators have. The goal is not word-for-word translation. What we are translating is the meaning and we want to make it sound natural. With step 5, the **SELF-EDIT**, we are checking to be sure that we have not left out any important ideas, added any ideas or conveyed the meaning of the chunk incorrectly.

MARA:

Let me ask this question, because I think it is one that many translators have. It would seem to be easier to keep the chunk in your national language in front of you and

translate it into your mother-tongue language that way. Why is it important that you do the translation without looking at the passage in your national language?

JOHN:

That is a good question. I wondered about that myself. The people leading our workshop explained that translating while looking at the chunk in the national language does not result in a translation that is easy to read or understand. Some of the translators tried translating with their Scripture in front of them. The result was accurate individual words, but the translation did not sound natural or smooth. It was very formal and chopped up. It did not sound like we were talking in our mother-tongue language. It made things more difficult to understand most of the time.

MARA:

Could you give us an example of how **SELF-EDIT** works, using a short chunk? I think that a demonstration will be helpful.

JOHN:

Sure. For this demonstration, let us use a very small chunk. How about the book of John, chapter 3, verses 16 and 17?

MARA:

In the national language, those verses read, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world in order to condemn the world, but in order to save the world through Him.”

JOHN:

Let me try a blind draft of those two verses in our mother-tongue language now. I would say, “God loved the world so much that He sent us His Son. Anyone who believes in His Son will not die but will have everlasting life. God did not send His Son to condemn the world. He did it in order to save the world.”

MARA:

Okay. If we were doing the **SELF-EDIT**, you would take your blind draft and compare it to those verses in the national language.

JOHN:

I am comparing the two now. I notice that in the blind draft I said, “He sent us His Son,” but I did not include the idea that it is God’s only Son. I think that is important and that I should include it. I think that I might be able to do better with the last sentence as well. Right now, I said that “He did it in order to save the world.” In the national language, that sentence includes the idea that the world is saved through God’s Son. I think that is important. I think I will change that, too. After the self-edit, my translation reads, “God

loved the world so much that He sent us His only Son. Anyone who believes in His Son will not die but will have everlasting life. God did not send His Son to condemn the world. He did it so the world would be saved through His Son.”

MARA:

Thank you for that demonstration of step five. Is there anything you worry about when you do the **SELF-EDIT**?

JOHN:

Those two verses we just did were easier verses to translate. Often, it is more difficult to do the **SELF-EDIT**. I find it helps to pray and ask for God’s help before and during the **SELF-EDIT**, so I can communicate the ideas accurately and clearly. I needed to remember that my first blind draft of a chunk will not be perfect. That is okay. As we work through the checking steps it will improve.

MARA:

Thanks. The next is step six, the **PEER-EDIT**. Some people wonder why there needs to be another check. What is important about the **PEER-EDIT**?

JOHN:

What is important about the **PEER-EDIT** is that someone else is looking at your translation for the first time. Sometimes when someone else reads your **BLIND DRAFT**, they see things that you would not see yourself.

Because you have worked so closely with the chunk, you know what you are saying. But to someone else, some things may not be as clear as you think they are.

MARA:

Tell us how the **PEER-EDIT** works.

JOHN:

Two translators trade their translated chapters and each translator reads the other’s chapter to check that it accurately conveys the meaning and that the translation is clear and natural. Then you get together and discuss what is not clear or where the meaning may not be clear. It is important during the checking steps to listen to the comments of your fellow translator. They are not being critical of your work. They are trying to help you and assure the translation is the best it can be. It is up to you, as the translator, if you want to accept a suggestion and make a change.

MARA:

Can you give us an example of how the **PEER-EDIT** helps?

JOHN:

The **PEER-EDIT** is interesting because sometimes there is something that the original translator totally has missed and does not realize it. The **PEER-EDIT** can catch a missing name in one of the genealogies, for example, or one of the languages spoken on Pentecost listed in the book of Acts chapter two. In one case, the translator doing the peer edit caught that the word “not” was missing. That completely changed the meaning of the verse. The translator was very glad that the omission was caught in the **PEER EDIT!**

MARA:

That is a good example of how we can be so close to something that we do not realize the word is missing. I know that sometimes it can be difficult to work with another person. Are there times when the two translators have differing ideas and are not able to work together smoothly?

JOHN:

Yes, there are times when there is a disagreement when people do the **PEER-EDIT**. I think that one reason for this is we are all very serious about our work. Everyone tries to be sure the translation is the best that it can be. People feel very strongly about the word that should be used or how an idea should be expressed. One example happened when working on the book of Acts, chapter two, verses 1 through 4. It reads, “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in the same place. Suddenly there came from heaven a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared to them tongues like fire that were distributed, and they sat upon each one of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to make declarations.” There was confusion about “tongues like fire” and how that should be translated. The author thought that it was how the disciples were speaking. The person doing the peer-edit thought it had to do with real flames of fire on the disciples. Both were not sure of their interpretation.

MARA:

What happened then? How is a situation like that resolved?

JOHN:

The two translators felt they should consult another source to see if they could better understand the phrase “tongues like fire.” They checked a few other translations. After using other resources, they thought that what was being described was a symbol of the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples as Jesus had promised. They also made a note that this was something they wanted to check further when they worked on step seven - the **KEYWORD CHECK**.

MARA:

Are there other examples you can share?

JOHN:

This example that presents a different type of challenge. Some of the verses in Scripture are difficult to translate because they include metaphors. In translating, though, it can be difficult to know if they are a metaphor or if they are to be taken literally. Here is an example from the book of Revelation, chapter 3, verse 20. “Look, I am standing at the door and am knocking. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come into his home and will eat with him, and he with Me.” In the **PEER-EDIT**, there can be discussion of how best to translate this verse. What is the door that Jesus is knocking on? Is He saying that we should welcome Him into our house and be hospitable? What does He mean? The translators needed to check other translations and Bible commentaries to try to understand the intended meaning of the verse. Based on this, the translators felt that the meaning was that Jesus is talking about our heart like a door and that we should open our heart to Him and keep Him with us in our hearts. That is how they translated the verse.

MARA:

That certainly was a difficult verse.

JOHN:

Yes. It is good that the translators were so careful to be sure that they communicated the intended message of the verse. When you understand it, it paints such a beautiful word picture of Jesus dwelling with us.

MARA:

John, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today. Your explanations and examples help us understand steps five and six better – the **SELF-EDIT** and the **PEER-EDIT**. We appreciate the work and dedication of you and the other translators to bring an accurate translation in our mother-tongue language. In closing, now, could you please offer a prayer?

JOHN:

I would be happy to. Dear Lord, thank You for the MAST method to translate Scripture into our mother-tongue language. Thank you that so much emphasis is put on the accuracy of translation. Be with us as we continue our work to provide accurate, meaningful Scripture in our mother-tongue language. Help us to work together well, especially when we are doing the **PEER-EDIT**. Help us to be open to suggestions from others, knowing that they are meant to improve the clarity and accuracy of our translation. We pray that others will hear the call and join with us to work on the translation. Also, we ask your blessings on those who will read the translation – that

they will grow closer to You through hearing Your Word in their mother-tongue language. Amen.

MARA:

Thank you for sharing with us and for your prayer. To those of you listening, we pray that you will have a good week. For those who are translators, we pray that it will be a week with few distractions and much production. We look forward to our next time together. God bless you!

If you have any questions about your current project or want to start a project in your own mother-tongue language, please send an email to reachingalldialects@gmail.com or radio@wycliffeassociates.org or call/text: