

BROADCAST #4

Quality Assurance

LIAM:

Greetings! This is Liam and Sofia again, wanting to continue our story on how God brought His Word to our language.

SOFIA:

We began this story by sharing our heart's desire to have the Bible in our mother tongue, the language of our family. For us, the Bible is only available in English and many of our people cannot read or understand it well enough to respond to. We were told of a similar story from Africa where a 70-year-old man was fearful that he would die before having scripture in his language.

LIAM:

We talked about my cousin, Samuel, who told us about an amazing new method of Bible translation that he saw another language group use. They were able to translate the whole New Testament into their language in under a year! The man from Africa was on a team using the same method and he was in tears because during an event the book of Matthew was translated. That was after the team spent the last 20 years translating the book of Mark using a different translation method.

SOFIA:

A mission organization, called Wycliffe Associates, helped us and the small team that we recruited to learn a new translation method. We have been working hard and now have the book of Mark translated. Our mother also has tears of joy because God is now speaking to her.

LIAM:

Our team of my wife Sofia, Caleb, James, Ruth and myself used this new translation method called MAST. MAST stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation. It has eight steps. Following the **Eight Steps** closely helps us make sure our work is clear, natural and accurate.

SOFIA:

Let's go over the steps.

LIAM:

Ok, what was **Step One**?

SOFIA:

Step One is **Consume**. We read a portion of scripture in the source text 2-3 times to get a good understanding of the story or topic. Remember – spend no more than 8 minutes on the reading of each chapter or portion. What was **Step Two**?

LIAM:

Step Two is **Verbalize**. This means to speak it out loud in our mother tongue language. It is great to speak it to another person but not necessary. The important thing is to say it in the mother tongue language and to not look at the source text.

What was **Step Three**?

SOFIA:

Step Three is **Chunk**. That's a strange word that means to break it down into smaller pieces. We looked at the portion we consumed and put pencil marks to separate smaller pieces that were 1-3 verses long.

LIAM:

Step Four is the important step of **Blind Drafting**. Taking one chunk at a time, we read the chunk in the source text a few times, turn the source text over and then write out the chunk in our language. It is hard to not look at the source text while writing but doing it correctly made the draft smooth and natural.

SOFIA:

Those are the **Four Steps** to draft the translation. Why spend more time checking? Isn't it good enough? We did feel that we had done good work but really wanted to make sure that it was clear and understandable. In fact, Liam, didn't we just read a passage that reminded us of the need to make our translations clear and understandable?

LIAM:

That's right Sofia. I was reading in Nehemiah 8, where Ezra, a scribe from a priestly family, and Nehemiah, a Jew, who was a high official in the Persian government, had a high platform built in Jerusalem so that the people could go and hear the Word of the Lord read to them. While the Word was read, people were moved to weeping and then after being encouraged it says in Nehemiah 8:12, that all the people went away to eat and drink, and to share food and to celebrate with great joy, because *they had understood the words that were spoken to them*. The key is that they now understood the words that were being read.

SOFIA:

How could they understand the words that were read? The Jews had just returned from captivity and they now spoke Aramaic, right? So, they no longer spoke or understood Hebrew. Only the priests and scribes knew Hebrew. Ezra would have read those scrolls in Hebrew. So, how did they understand?

LIAM:

The answer is in verses 7-8. It says the Levites...helped the people understand the Law while the people remained in their place. They read in the book, *The Law of God*, making it clear with interpretation and giving the meaning so the people understood the

reading. *The* phrase, “making it clear” mean that “they translated it.” The Levites were making sure the people heard the Word in the language that spoke to their hearts. It spoke to the people and they responded.

SOFIA:

People can only respond if they understand the message, if they hear it in a language that speaks to their hearts.

LIAM:

We are very concerned that our translations are clear and speak to our mother’s heart as well as the rest of our family and community. That is why we follow the drafting with four checking steps. Do you remember **Step Five**?

SOFIA:

Step Five is **Self-Edit**. After I draft a portion, I compare what I drafted with the original source text. The main purpose is to check for content. As you may remember from our last conversation, in the draft of Mark 1, Liam left out a few things and even added a couple that were not in the source text. Liam made the necessary edits on his draft. This is also the step where we circle important words and terms and put in the verse numbers. Next was **Step Six**. What is that?

LIAM:

Step Six is **Peer-Edit**. This is an edit done with another member of the translation team, one of your peers. They read the drafted portion to themselves or out loud to another person. Is it natural and clear? Was anything confusing or sound funny? If it did, then you should change it. Then we moved to **Step Seven**, remember that one?

SOFIA:

Step Seven is **Keyword Check**. Our teams did two different checks, one with two people and another with the whole team. We discussed important words and terms to be sure we were picking just the right words in our language and that we all were consistent with our choices. Lastly, there was **Step Eight**. What was **Step Eight**?

LIAM:

Step Eight is a **Verse-by Verse Check**. There are a few different ways to do this last step. Our team got together on a regular basis and took turns reading our completed chapters one verse at a time. One person followed along in the source text and others looked along in other versions. Everyone was involved in making sure the drafted material was accurate, clear and natural. Another way to do this step is called “back translation” which means to translate the portion you are checking back into the language of the source text and then comparing them. This can be done by reading it out loud or writing it down and comparing the two scriptures. Then make any changes needed to ensure accuracy and natural language.

SOFIA:

When we did **Step Eight**, the **Verse-by-Verse Check** on my portion, we discovered a problem. I translated Mark Chapter 3 and when I read the passage out loud about the man being healed, the team looked puzzled. I asked them what the problem was. One finally spoke and said, "We thought that Jesus was the healed the man, but you just said that the Pharisees healed him." "I did not," I responded. "I correctly drafted and included each name and the pronouns (he, they, them) exactly like in the source text!"

LIAM:

That may be, but the way our language uses the pronoun and how it connects to the proper nouns, it is saying to us that the Pharisees healed the man. Perhaps you should replace the pronoun with the name "Jesus" to make it clear.

SOFIA:

We learned that languages are not all the same with how they use pronouns and how the listener or reader knows who the pronoun is referring to. We learned to go back and review stories to make sure it is clear and repeat the specific name again if necessary. This is a danger if we translate word for word instead of doing a Blind Draft.

LIAM:

It is very important that what we do is well done. How do we make sure our translations are quality? What is quality? Who decides if it is quality?

SOFIA:

These are all very good questions. The people with Wycliffe Associates suggested that we get our churches involved in this next phase. It was nice that we each had a different denomination as our home church. It is our desire that the translation is quality but also that it gains the approval from the churches in our community so that both the people and the church use it.

LIAM:

We invited each church to attend a meeting where we shared our vision to have God's Word in our language and to have their approval. We asked the representatives a couple questions. One, did they want a representative from their church on the translation team? Two, would they help with this next phase of quality assurance and approval?

SOFIA:

A few of the churches agreed to have people join our translation team which is wonderful as it will make the work go even faster. A couple did not have people to help us in the translation process but were supportive of the work. All but one wanted to be part of the next phase of quality assurance and approval.

LIAM:

Our team met with the representatives from the churches to start this next phase. First, we asked everyone to think about what makes a good translation. After a couple minutes of thought, we asked each person to create their own list of ten characteristics of a quality translation.

SOFIA:

Once everyone completed their list, Caleb stood at the white board and wrote down all the characteristics as each one shared their own list. Everyone was surprised that the different lists were very similar. Everyone wanted it to be clear and accurate. It was easy to merge the lists and create one list that everyone agreed on.

LIAM:

As we discussed the final list, we talked about defining each characteristic. For example, what does it mean to say the Bible translation should be accurate? We came up with three definitions of accuracy, one of which was that key words and terms are accurate when compared to the source text.

SOFIA:

We then worked on questions that could be answered with a “yes” or “no” to determine if a passage met the characteristic listed on the board. For accuracy with key words and terms we had two questions: were all the key words and terms that are in the source text found in the translation? Second, were the words and terms accurately translated?

LIAM:

After much work, we had a set of Yes and No questions that could be asked concerning a translated chapter. If the answer was ever a “No,” then the group would work on editing the portion so that the answer could be changed to a “Yes.”

SOFIA:

The hard part was then finding the time for the group to go thru the whole translation, making sure that all the questions were answered with a “Yes.” Having a “Yes” for each of the questions made it simple for all the church representatives to approve the work.

LIAM:

That is right since they all agree on the characteristics of a quality translation and they all agree to answer “Yes” for the questions they already agreed that it met their standards of quality.

SOFIA:

Liam and I would like to review the quality and approval phase and suggest that if you are doing a translation for your language community, that you follow these steps as well.

LIAM:

It took a lot of work and some time, but it was well worth the effort to have the churches involved with the process and approval. You will want to contact the different churches in your community. Tell them about your heart and desire for God's Word in your language and what you are doing to make that happen.

SOFIA:

Next, you will want to invite the churches to be involved with the translation project. Be clear that they can be involved in a couple of ways. They can provide people to help your team with the work itself and they can be involved with this phase of quality assurance and approval.

LIAM:

Oh, and pray first that God will prepare their hearts. Find a time when all the church representatives can meet. After beginning the meeting with prayer and sharing the vision for God's Word in your mother tongue, ask each person to write down ten characteristics of a quality Bible translation. Each person creates their own list, by themselves.

SOFIA:

Choose someone to collect the lists from each person. It will help if you are able to use a whiteboard or chalkboard but even paper works. You will find that the lists will have similar characteristics and it should be easy to combine the lists into one master list that everyone can agree on.

LIAM:

Now go thru the list and talk about each characteristic. Talk about what makes each characteristic true in a translation. What defines that characteristic? Our team came up with five ways to define accuracy. Two were that it needs to be historically accurate and second that all key words and terms in the source text need to be present in the translation.

SOFIA:

Your next step is to take the list of definitions and create at least one question for each definition that can be answered with a "Yes" or a "No." An example is for the characteristic of accuracy. One definition is that all key words and terms in the source text are found in the translation. A question could be, "Are all the key words and terms in the source text for this passage found in the translation?" It would be answered, "Yes or No."

LIAM:

Create a list of all the questions. The group can then ask each question for each chapter as they review the translation. Hopefully they answer yes to all questions, but a "No" is

okay too, as it will show an area to edit and improve. Once the group has gone through a book, they should be ready and willing to put their approval on the translation.

SOFIA:

Another step you can take in making sure your translation is quality, is to keep increasing the participants that assist with the project.

LIAM:

We began with individuals, each person working on and drafting their own assigned chapters. Then we involved others on the team in the checking process. Immediately, we suggested you contact churches to be involved to help determine what makes a quality translation and creating questions to apply to each portion.

SOFIA:

To increase the audience or participation, you can read through chapters with either the churches or community. Simply gather groups of people from the churches or community to listen to the reading of the translation.

LIAM:

Those that participate can respond to the basic questions. Was it clear and smooth in the language and did they understand it well? Did it contradict some theology or doctrine? The translation team can then decide on necessary edits.

SOFIA:

What happened next with our friend Sani and the Militants? Remember, the person that called, asked Sani to come and talk about this man Jesus and just shared that they all had a vision of a great man that blocked their path.

LIAM:

They then returned to their camp. The caller and his four co-leaders were very confused and distressed. They decided that they should all go off by themselves to pray and think.

They each took their prayer rugs and found quiet places to sit and think. The caller said as he was sitting, a stranger in white came through the bush, greeted him and joined him on the ground. As they talked, the stranger recounted the experiences with the vision they just had. The caller said, "How can you know this and all about me?" The stranger, who was sitting with His hands tucked under His arms, pulled out His hands to reveal wounds on His palms and said, "I am Jesus and I have come that you might have salvation and bring salvation to others."

SOFIA:

The caller said he immediately fell forward and repented. The stranger got up and disappeared into the bush. The caller jumped up and ran to find his co-leaders. He met them and discovered they had just had the same experience with this stranger! They all

had responded to this Jesus and now wondered what they should do next. One of them remembered hearing about a man from their tribe that preached about this man Jesus. They decided they needed to call him. That man was Sani.

LIAM:

How will Sani respond to this new story? Will he take the risk and visit with these militants or stay home and be safe?

SOFIA:

Continue with your work! Keep doing the **Eight Steps** and see God's Word in your mother tongue language. Don't stop with that; expand your participation by getting others involved from your church and community. Never stop improving the translation.

LIAM:

Keep up the good work! If you want to start a translation project for your language, **contact reachingalldialects@gmail.com or call and text:**