

Key Words – Walkthrough

(Slide deck and white board recommended – 30 to 60 min. +30 min. if using additional bilingual exercise; handouts of Luke 17 in ULB and several highlighters or pens needed for exercise)

Intro: Step 7 of the MAST process is key word check. Translators should have a good understanding of what a key word is, as well as how to check key words, in order to do step 7 properly.

Ask: How would you define a key word? *(List answers on white board or easel. If they give examples, put those in a separate list. Note that these might not be single words—for example, “Holy Spirit.”)*

Explain: A key word is

- a word that has a strong impact on the overall meaning of the passage
- an abstract word
- a spiritual term
- a word that is repeated throughout a section of Scripture for emphasis (Examples of repeated words include “immediately” in Mark, or “joy” & “rejoice” in Philippians.)

(Note to Trainer: Some teams include all names of people and places in their key word list and some do not. Historically, not all of these have been included, but including them is not wrong; it is merely a preference.)

Ask: When thinking about the MAST process, are there other steps where you might find errors in key words? *(They might suggest that both self-edit and peer-edit provide opportunities to find these errors.)* Explain that even though there are two previous steps where errors could be caught in key words, this step is essential because it concentrates the checking to specifically target words that express spiritual concepts.

Ask: Why do you think these words should be targeted in this separate checking step? Some of these words are uncommon, or hard to translate. There may not be a precise equivalent for them in every language, so they may need to be carefully considered, or even created.

Ask: What do you think are key words in John 3:16? Have them look the verse over and suggest key words. Put those on the board. *(The list should include God, loved, world, only, Son, believes, perish, eternal life.)* Talk about how if any of these words are mis-translated or skipped, there would be an inaccurate and potentially harmful translation. Discuss the complex meaning of “perish” in this passage. Would it be OK to use a word that means “die”? Why or why not? *(You may also want to discuss what the*

term “world” means in this passage—does it refer to all of creation? all living beings? etc.)

Practice: Do the following exercise to guide understanding in how to choose key words from a passage. Pass out Luke 17 in the source language. Have participants work in pairs to read through the passage and highlight all words they think are key words. *(If you are training multiple languages and will have internet, participants may access the ULB in their language for the exercise and use pen and paper to write down the keywords.)* Allow about 15 minutes for this exercise. Remind them to work together and to be ready to defend their choices of words.

Gather the groups together to discuss what they found. Ask if they think their lists will be the same. *(They should quickly recognize that they won’t be exact.)* Explain that choosing key words is not an exact process and it is OK for there to be some variance. Ask if they think that some words will be the same on everyone’s list. *(They should quickly respond that yes, some words will be.)* Explain that some words are essential and should be on every list. Compare their lists and ask them to defend their choices as needed. (If the teams are bilingual, you can do the added step of having them work to translate their list for Luke 17 into their heart language.) Ask them what they learned from the exercise.

Explain: When translators do key word check, they should work together to choose their own words as they have just done in this exercise. Although this is not a timed step, if they take longer than 20–30 minutes for a chapter, they may be analyzing too much, and they need to know that a longer list of key words does not always mean more clarity and precision. Be careful not to assume that too many words are key to the meaning and emphasis of the passage.

Ask: What should translators do once they have made their list of key words? *(They should be able to explain how each one is checked against the new translation to make sure they are all represented.)*

Explain: There are three things translators should do once they have made their list of key words.

1. Compare their new translation with the source text and make sure each word is represented.
2. If a word doesn’t exist in their language as often happens, discuss ways to convey the meaning. They can use resources like Translation Words to get a better idea of what the word means, or Translation Notes to see what other translators have done. Sometimes a new word can be created, or several words can be joined to express the meaning of one word. Sometimes the word can be borrowed from the source text and/or transliterated.

3. If a new way of expressing a key word is decided on by the team, they should make a list for everyone to use moving forward. This will help them to be consistent as a team. *(Include the names of people and places here, if checking those as key words.)*

Review key points:

- A key word is a word/phrase that carries significant meaning in the passage, a spiritual or abstract term, or a repeated word. It is often a word/phrase that is hard to translate because the meaning is complex. In that case, it can be difficult to find a precise equivalent across languages.
- It's important to check key words separately from other steps.
- Choosing key words for a passage can be a group exercise that aids in many aspects of accurate translation.

Confirm: Translators understand the process of key word check and why it is important.

Note to Trainers in Gateway Languages: You will need to prepare for the exercise by either printing Luke 17 in the ULB or confirming that the participants will all have access to the ULB online.