Broadcast 10 - Logic and Theory for Checking

OLIVER:
Hello everyone. This is Oliver, thank you for joining us! We will continue discussing how God is enabling us to get the Bible in our mother-tongue language.

MARA:
Over the past several weeks, we shared with you the steps to the MAST translation process. We also told stories about how God's Word is already impacting our families and community.

OLIVER:
We cannot believe how much our team has already translated. We are all learning so much! Now we want to talk to you about the checking steps, the logic behind them, and why they are so important to the process. Before we do that, we should review the drafting steps quickly.

MARA:
Good idea, Oliver. Step one is CONSUME. It means to take in either by reading, or listening to someone read, a portion of Scripture. Step Two is VERBALIZE. In this step, you verbalize in your mother-tongue language what you just consumed in the national language. Step Three is CHUNK. This means you break down your chapter into smaller workable pieces. And then Step Four is BLIND DRAFT. Here you must close the source text and draft the first chunk in your own words.

Those are the first four steps. After these steps, you now have a draft. You can continue with these four steps and complete a chapter or several chapters, before moving on to the checking steps. However, do not draft too much without completing the checking steps, because you will improve your drafting by what you learn during the checking.

OLIVER:
Then, there are four checking steps—SELF-EDIT, PEER-EDIT, KEYWORD CHECK, and VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK. Each one adds a new layer. We will show you each of those layers and how and why they work. It is important to do each step individually. Combining the checking steps may seem like it would save time, but instead, it takes more time and can result in errors being missed.

I remember we skipped SELF-EDIT one time because we were hurrying to get the last chapters of Mark done before the workshop was over. Several of us agreed we would check each other's work and not worry about doing SELF-EDIT. It took us a very long time to do PEER-EDIT. Much longer than it should have, and we kept interrupting each other to ask questions about the drafts. In the end, we realized we had not saved time. Instead, we had used much time and concentration and saved nothing.

MARA:
You just gave a great example of why the steps are to be done one at a time and in order. Each one allows for the next step to be done quickly and smoothly. SELF-EDIT is important because it allows the translator to look for the errors. This gives them time to study the source text and compare it with what is written. It allows them to focus on the work and learn from their own mistakes. It is also important because the translator takes responsibility for their work before asking others to give input. This increases the commitment to doing a thorough job. After a thorough SELF-EDIT, I feel ready for someone else to check my translation and make suggestions. I know I made it the best I can.

OLIVER:
PEER-EDIT is an opportunity for each of us to learn from each other. We have a standard for producing a quality translation and all of us are willing to hold each other accountable to that standard.

MARA:

PEER-EDIT often shows us simple grammar and spelling errors, especially for new or uncommon words. When I PEER-EDIT, I compare the translation to the source text so I can make sure everything is represented. Sometimes I will ask the translator questions about their word choices, or even the order in which they wrote their translation. This does not mean the translator has to correct anything. It gives time to explain why they chose to word the passage in a specific way. If neither of us is sure it is the best way to convey the message, we make a note for that chunk and leave it to check with other members of the team.

OLIVER:

Can you give us an example of a question you asked during a PEER-EDIT?

MARA:

Sure. I was peer-editing John 3:4, Nicodemus asks Jesus how a person that is old can be reborn. The translator had written the question like this, "Being already of age, how is it someone can be born?" I asked the translator why he had chosen to use our term for "of age" which is most commonly used for "mature." When we talk about a person whose body is fully adult, we use this term. I wondered why he had not used the term we use to refer to people who are elderly. This is a word commonly used to mean "old." The translator said he did not think Nicodemus was old since he was still serving as a Pharisee, so he chose the word to mean mature, or fully adult. Neither of us was sure which word would be correct, so we decided to wait and check with others on the team during our VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK.

OLIVER:

That is a great example. I am not sure which of our words would work best there. What did other members of the team say?

MARA:

The pastor and one of the elders who speaks several languages looked the verse up in those translations. They all used a term meaning "old." So, we changed it to our word for "old."

OLIVER:

Thanks for sharing an example of questions that might arise during PEER-EDIT. After PEER-EDIT, the translators work together to do Step Seven, KEYWORD CHECK. You might think the key words have already been checked during SELF-EDIT and PEER-EDIT and you would be partly right. Some key words have already been checked. Remember these steps are designed to set up the next step. Not all key words would probably be covered. And this also gives other team members a chance to help check the passage.

MARA:

When we learned this step, we looked over the passage ourselves in the source text and made a list of the words we thought were significant. These would be spiritual, geographical, or historical words. Then we checked for each one of these words in the new translation.

OLIVER:

Can you give us an example of the key words you chose to check from the passage in John chapter 3 you were helping with?

MARA:

We checked the terms "Pharisee," "Rabbi" and the names—Jesus, Nicodemus, and God. Then we also checked words like "born again" and "signs." On some words, different translators had spelled them differently—like our word for Pharisee. It is the same word as the national language but spelled to sound the way we pronounce it. During this step, we decided how to spell it. We must use one consistent spelling throughout the book of John, and throughout the whole New Testament.

OLIVER:

Yes. A lot of the words are similar. We want to make sure we are consistent. There is a list of important words to check found in the resources on the bibleineverylanguage.org website. This helps us make sure we checked all the terms. Usually, we check even more words than are on that list.

MARA:

Yes, we take our time and do a very thorough check at this point. Sometimes we must stop and research what a word or phrase means, so we know we are translating it correctly. For example, the word "signs" in verse 2 of John chapter 3. We have a word meaning something supernatural. But it is most often used about witch doctors and evil spirits. We have another word that means something surprising, or unexpected. We discussed this for a long time as a group and used the resources on the bibleineverylanguage.org website, where we could read a definition of the word and some suggestions on how to translate it. We finally decided we should use the word that means something unexpected, because it does not have the same implied meaning. Later we decided to use the same word with the adjective "powerful" to mean a miracle.

OLIVER:

Yes, Step Seven, KEYWORD CHECK, is my favorite part of the checking, because we do research together and make some amazing discoveries about God's Word.

MARA:

I am usually tired but extremely satisfied with our work after we complete this step. And if we did a careful job during KEYWORD CHECK, Step Eight, VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK goes smoothly.

OLIVER:

This is our eighth and final check of our own work. The VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK compares our newly translated Scripture to the source text to make sure nothing is missing, and nothing has been added. By this time, the translation has already been compared to the source text twice—once by the translator during SELF-EDIT and once by his partner during PEER-EDIT. Then, the KEYWORD CHECK has covered the details of important terms. This check is easy after those steps are completed. But if any of the other steps are skipped, this step can feel overwhelming!

MARA:

During my first checking meeting, I was part of a group that decided to combine the KEYWORD CHECK with the VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK. The person reading the translation read one verse at a time while someone compared it to the source text and then a third person looked at the key words in the source text and asked questions about the translations of those words.

At first, everything was going well. But after a few verses, we got confused and frustrated. It was too difficult to pay attention to everything at once. Some of us noticed missing connector words like "then" or "after" and others were saying, "Don't worry about those; they aren't on the key word list." We also forgot to mark spelling and word corrections so we could later standardize the spellings of those words

for consistency. It was very confusing, and after about fifteen verses, we realized we were wasting a lot of time trying to do the two steps together. We also realized we were not very confident in our work. We felt it still needed more checking. We learned from that experience not to combine steps!

OLIVER:

The checking steps provide layers of checking that allow us to do a big task in small bits at a time. With each checking step, more team members are involved reviewing the work. So, the layers of checking allow us to focus on corrections one step at a time and they also allow multiple team members to be involved. I hope you are all encouraged as we share with you why the checking steps are built in layers and how they should work. We learn by experience to trust the process and each other.

MARA:

I have one final thought to share. We talked a lot in this program about mistakes. I want to remind our listeners, mistakes are ok, they will happen! Everyone makes mistakes and nobody should be afraid to translate because they might make mistakes. Instead, remember we have God's Spirit in us guiding us to see our mistakes and we have a team working together to find solutions!

OLIVER:

Translating God's Word is a great blessing and responsibility, and we are grateful to share our story with you.

If you have questions about your current project or want to start a project in your own mother-tongue language, please call or text (local country partner info) or send an email to reachingalldialects@gmail.com or radio@wycliffeassociates.org.