

Broadcast #1 – Introduction to Bible Translation

LIAM:

Hello! My name is Liam. I am here with my wife, Sofia.

SOFIA:

Hello everyone! We are glad you are joining us today.

LIAM:

We want to share an amazing story with you. It is about how God enabled our people to have a Bible in our mother-tongue language.

SOFIA:

We will start at the beginning. Liam and I live in a community where every day we speak to each other in our local language. That is the language we feel most comfortable with. It is our mother-tongue language. The national language of our country is the language of the government and most businesses. It is the language taught in schools. Many of our people are fluent in the national language, but we are more comfortable talking, reading, and thinking in our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

There also are many people in our community who do not know the national language very well and some do not know it at all.

SOFIA:

My cousin is an example. Sometimes I will read an article to her in the national language. She will say she understands it. When I ask her questions about it, though, she really has not understood what I read. Often, she has missed the main point of what I was reading. Sometimes she even thinks the message is the opposite of what it says. I then explain it to her in our mother-tongue language so she can understand.

LIAM:

That is a great example, Sofia. It helps to make our point. For our people, the Bible is available only in the national language. Most Christian books and even the pastor's sermons at church on Sunday are all in the national language. Last Sunday, I asked my mother what she thought about the pastor's message. She said the pastor was very excited about whatever he was talking about, but she understood very little of what he was saying. I had to explain it to her in our mother-tongue language.

SOFIA:

We are very concerned for my cousin and Liam's mother and many other people in our community who cannot understand God's Word or the preaching because it is not in our mother-tongue language. It is not only the older generation we are concerned about. The younger children may not yet know the national language. Other people may know the words in the national language that are needed for school or business but not the words that will help them understand Scripture. How can these people respond to the message of God's love? Liam, I remember when you were reading the Bible you came across a teaching about how important it is that everyone can understand God's Word.

LIAM:

Yes. In the Old Testament book of the prophet Isaiah, he calls for barriers to be removed so all people see God's glory and know Him. Suddenly it became clear to me. Language is a barrier standing in the way of people in our community understanding God's message and knowing Him. If we only have Scripture in the national language, it will be very difficult for all our people to grow in their knowledge

and understanding of God and His Word.

SOFIA:

We knew getting the Bible translated into our mother-tongue language was a big task. We heard it takes a long time for the Bible to be translated into a new language.

LIAM:

Yes, Sofia. Missionaries would live in a village to learn the language and culture well enough to translate the Scriptures. That could take a lifetime! We prayed for a faster method so our people could have the Bible in our mother-tongue language quickly.

SOFIA:

We prayed for a long time and then God answered our prayers! We shared our desire for a translation in our mother-tongue language with a friend who was visiting us. He mentioned a language group in the area where he lives that recently finished translating their New Testament. This local church had been able to do the translation themselves and they had done it in just one year using a method called MAST.

LIAM:

Yes, this was our answer from God. It promised a way everyone in our community could read and hear scripture in the language that speaks to their heart. We begged for our friend to tell us more. We wanted to know how we could make this happen for our community.

SOFIA:

Our friend gave us contact information so we could connect with people in our country who help with Bible translation using the MAST method. We talked with them and learned more. We understood this method would help us accomplish our goal to have Scripture in our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

First, we needed to connect with our pastor and talk to him about this opportunity so that we could gather a group of volunteers to help with the translation work. That seemed like a difficult task. We wondered who was qualified to translate Scripture. Where would we find people that knew the national language and our mother-tongue language with the education and interest to devote time to this task?

SOFIA:

We also learned no special education is needed for people to help with the translation. Volunteers need to be believers who want to help get Scripture in their mother tongue language. And they need to be fluent in both our mother-tongue language and the national language. That is because we use the Bible in the national language as the source text for our translation. We prayed and asked God to provide people who share our vision of having Scripture in our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

As the Bible says, ask and you will receive. We did receive! Many Christians were interested in joining the translation team. There were both men and women, young and old on our team. One volunteer is a business leader who was looking for a meaningful way to give back to the community. There is a student who has been studying the Bible. He thinks involvement in the translation will help him grow in his understanding of Scripture. Two sisters felt this would be a way for them to spend time together doing something helpful for their parents. Another team member is an older widow whose family is

grown and moved away. She has a love for the Lord and time to give. What all these volunteers have in common is a heart for the work. They all want Scripture to be available in our mother-tongue language.

SOFIA:

At our first meeting as a team, we spent time together in prayer. Then Liam and I discussed the process we would use to do the translation. We shared our excitement that this new method uses ordinary people like us and trusts us to do the work. The organization that came to train us, Wycliffe Associates, was there to support us, but we are the ones who are responsible for the organizing, translating, checking and quality of our translation. They also encouraged us to look for other language groups that wanted a Bible translation and to train them, as Wycliffe Associates had trained us.

LIAM:

We knew we wanted to start with the New Testament. We talked about which book to translate first. Some wanted to start at the beginning of the New Testament, with the book of Matthew. Others wanted to start with one of the other Gospel books – Mark, Luke, or John. Some liked the idea of starting with one of the letters to the churches, like the book of First Corinthians, because it has instructions about living the Christian life. One thing everyone agreed about was the book of Revelation would be a challenging place to start and decided to save it for later.

SOFIA:

After a lot of discussion, the team decided the Gospel of Mark was a good place to start. It gives a straightforward presentation of Jesus and His message. We thought it was a book our people would want to hear and read in our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

Once those decisions were made, we were ready to start translating. The translation method has eight steps. Sofia and I will tell you a little about each of the steps, so you get an idea of how it works.

SOFIA:

First, each person reads an assigned chapter of Scripture. This step is called CONSUME. Then the person says aloud the message and details of their chapter to another translator. That is called VERBALIZE. The third step is for the person to divide the chapter into smaller segments of one to four verses. That is called CHUNK. The fourth step is BLIND DRAFT. In this step you review your chunk of Scripture and then, without looking at the chunk, you write it in your mother-tongue language. The goal is to write the scripture as you would say it in your mother-tongue language and not be a direct translation of each word.

LIAM:

Thanks, Sofia. I will continue with the checking steps. Accuracy is important, so there are four checking steps in this method of translation. Step five is SELF-EDIT. In this first checking step you compare your BLIND DRAFT to the source text in the national language. The sixth step is PEER-EDIT. This checking step you do with another member of the translation team and like the previous step the checker will compare the BLIND DRAFT with the source text. The KEYWORD CHECK is step seven. On this step a different checker or group specifically checks the key words or important terms in the chapter for accuracy and consistency. Step eight is the VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK. In this final checking step, a different checker or group will ensure that the translation accurately communicates the same message as the source text. All these steps help assure the accuracy and quality of the translation. During the checking steps, the team can use free resources that have been specifically created to help translators with accuracy and clarity. These can be found at bibleineverylanguage.org.

SOFIA:

We are going through the method very quickly. I am sure you have questions. We will explain each of the eight steps in more detail when we meet again.

LIAM:

After our team finished several chapters of the Gospel of Mark, we shared them with our pastor, who had not been able to join us at the workshop. For the first time he was able to use Scripture in our mother-tongue language to preach his sermon. After the sermon I asked my mother about the message. Her eyes filled with tears of joy. She said it was like God was speaking to her own heart.

SOFIA:

I talked with my cousin, too. She said this was the first time she was able to truly understand what was being read from the Bible.

LIAM:

Having just a few chapters in our mother-tongue language made a difference for our community. That encouraged us to keep working. We completed the book of Mark. Then we continued to work. We have been working for about a year now. We have translated more than half of the books of the New Testament. Our prayer is to continue our work and complete the New Testament. We are so happy to bring our desire to have Scripture in our mother-tongue language to reality.

Sofia and I would like to leave you with a couple of questions. Do you have God's Word in your mother-tongue language? Is there a translation project in progress?

SOFIA:

If the answer is "no" to those questions, do you want to be part of changing that? Pray about your involvement. Talk with your pastor, people in your church and others who have the same desire for Scripture in your language. Gather interested believers to pray and discuss this amazing opportunity. Together you can be the start of a team of volunteers ready to commit to the process of seeing God's word come to your mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

Thank you for joining us. We pray you will join us on the journey to see God's Word translated into every language. Next time we will tell you about the first four steps of the translation process in detail.

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.