

Topic 2 – Meaning Based Bible Translation

J- Welcome back to Wycliffe Associates' Bible Translation Educator series! This is Topic number 2: Meaning Based Bible Translation.

T - Our goal in this audio training series is to provide you, the translator, with specific ideas and tools to aid your translation work and to help others train in Bible translation. You may want to make note of certain points in this discussion which will help you communicate these ideas to others.

J - The MAST translation method Wycliffe Associates uses to train translators is built on Meaning Based Translation, so what exactly does that mean and why is it important for us to learn?

T- First let's consider what we mean by "meaning-based translation." To put it simply there are two differing ideas about translation of any work from one language into another. One idea is that to maintain the accuracy of the original, the translator must do his best to follow the form of the original, and consider each word of the original in making the translation. This is called a form-based translation.

J- The other idea is that the message of the original should be translated in a way that will most likely be understood by the speakers of that language. So the attention to words is to understand the overall meaning and then recreate that meaning in the structure of the new language.

T- For example a form-based translation of "Me llamo Juan" from Spanish to English would be "I call myself John." A meaning based translation would be, "My name is John." If you speak more than one language, when you interpret from one to the other for a non-speaker, you are most likely engaging in meaning based translation.

J - Almost all oral interpretation is expected to be meaning-based. When translating Scripture, one can become worried that changing the "words" of Scripture might be sacrilegious. However, the message of the Scripture is what is sacred. The message must be carefully recreated in a way that accurately expresses its meaning. And that will often require a change in the words, and even the word order.

T - Let's look at another example. In the Lomogai language of Papua New Guinea a person can call someone else "warm hearted." This is the literal translation into English of that phrase. But what it means to the Lomogai people when someone is called this, is that the person is angry. So to directly translate this phrase, does not convey the meaning to an English speaker, who

thinks of warm hearted as kind, thoughtful or gentle. A meaning based translation for this phrase would be “hot tempered” or “hot under the collar.”

J- As you consider these two ideas about translation, which one do you think is best for translating God’s Word? Do you think there is a way to make sure your translation is understood and used by the community?

T – Keep those thoughts in mind as you move on to our next session when we’ll discuss the 8 steps which make up the MAST method of Bible translation.

J - Following these 8 steps consistently is very important to the quality of a meaning based translation. You may want to take a moment between sessions and prepare to take notes, if you haven’t done so already.

T- May the Lord bless you as you prayerfully consider meaning based Bible translation and prepare for Session 1 of our next topic.