

Broadcast #2 – Translation Steps 1-4

LIAM:

Hello! This is Sofia and Liam. Thank you for joining us again. We want to tell you more about how God answered our prayers to have Scripture in our mother-tongue language.

SOFIA:

The Bible was available only in the national language. Many people in our community do not know that language well. My cousin and Liam's mother are among those who have limited understanding. We knew they would understand better if they heard God's Word in our mother-tongue language.

Our story began with our great concern for having God's message in our mother-tongue language. Liam and I can speak and read in both our mother-tongue language and the national language. This is not the case for many of our people. It is a struggle for them to understand God's message of love when it is in a language they do not know or know well.

LIAM:

We learned from our friend about a new translation method called MAST. It stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation. It enables people who are fluent in the national language to translate scripture into their mother-tongue language. It takes less time than many other translation methods. Our friend told us the team in his community translated the entire New Testament in a year!

SOFIA:

This was God's answer to our prayer. We learned more about the method. We got a team together. In a year we translated over half of the New Testament into our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

We want to share with you how the method works and tell you about our experience.

SOFIA:

Last time, we went over all the steps of the translation method quickly. Maybe you wanted to know more about the steps? Maybe you had questions? Today we will concentrate on the first 4 steps in the MAST process and tell you about them in greater detail.

LIAM:

Wait, Sofia. There is something we did before we started translating. Our team had to decide which Bible to use as the source text for our translation. There are several versions of the Bible in the national language. Different people prefer different versions. It is important to have consistency and have everyone on the translation teamwork from the same source text. We had to decide which translation to use.

SOFIA:

Then we learned about a version called the Unlocked Literal Bible, also called the ULB. It is often used for translation. This version is copy-righted under an open license agreement that allows anyone to use it without paying the copy-right holder. It is available online which means each of the translators could access it. If you want to look at it, it is available at the website bibleineverylanguage.org on the Translations tab. We will talk more about the ULB and other resources in a later broadcast.

LIAM:

We studied the options available and decided to use the Unlocked Literal Bible in the national language as our source text.

SOFIA:

There is another important thing we did. We prayed every time before we began translating. We thanked God for trusting us with the mission to translate His Word for our people. We asked the Holy Spirit to guide us in every decision and word choice as we worked on the translation. We prayed that we would work well together as a team to achieve this important goal.

LIAM:

Then we were ready to start! Now we will review, in detail, the first four steps of the MAST Bible translation method.

SOFIA:

Step one is CONSUME. No, you do not eat your Scriptures! You are not filling yourself with food. You are filling yourself with the message of Scripture. You read the chapter you are going to translate until you feel you really understand it. You CONSUME its meaning. You will spend 5 to 7 minutes on this step.

LIAM:

This step is done using the source text in the national language. We agreed to start with the book of Mark. Each translator is assigned a different chapter to work on. Some chapters in Mark are long. If there is a long chapter there are two options. One option is to CONSUME the first half of the chapter for 5 to 7 minutes. Then pause, think about what was consumed. Stand up and walk around for a minute. Then sit back down and do the second half for the same amount of time. The second option, which is what we decided to do, is to divide those chapters into two or three portions of 20-30 verses each. Which tool you are using may help you decide which option will work for you. If using paper and pencil, either option will work. Sofia, I think it will help if you share your experience with step one.

SOFIA:

I will be happy to share. First, I sat down by myself and read the passage of Mark chapter 16 that I was assigned. It has 20 verses, so I didn't have to break it up. I read it twice. I felt I had a good understanding of it.

LIAM:

Does that step always take two readings?

SOFIA:

Some passages are more difficult than others and take more readings. You should read the passage again if you do not understand it. Usually, though, reading through twice is a good way to understand the passage. Remember, it is important not to spend too much time on this step. You may feel like you don't understand everything, but the next steps will help you realize how much you do understand.

LIAM:

What did you do next?

SOFIA:

Then I moved to step two. That is called VERBALIZE. That was my first opportunity to check my understanding. I closed the source text and spoke the passage out loud in our mother-tongue language to my friend. Remember how I mentioned telling my cousin the message of articles written in our national language? It is similar to that. I told my friend the message of the passage.

LIAM:

What if there is no one available to hear you VERBALIZE? Is it okay to skip this step?

SOFIA:

This is an important step. You should not skip it. This step helps you get the passage set in your mind in your mother-tongue language and prepares your brain to translate it. You can VERBALIZE out loud to yourself if you have no one to work with.

LIAM:

I do not have a good memory. I was worried about this step. I wondered how I could remember the whole passage.

SOFIA:

Other people also feel that way. With this step, you are not trying to memorize the passage. The listener does not interrupt while you are talking. This is not a discussion; it is an expression of what you read and the main points.

LIAM:

Everything that helps the translation is important. Let us move on to step three.

SOFIA:

Step three is called CHUNK. In this step, you break your assigned passage into smaller portions to translate. You make CHUNKS of one to four verses. You try to divide the passage so the CHUNK tells a complete thought or story you can remember and retell

easily. What I did was go back through my paper copy of the source text and mark each CHUNK with a pencil.

LIAM:

That prepares us for step four.

SOFIA:

Step four is the BLIND DRAFT. This is when we write out the chapter of Scripture in our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

I remember some of us found BLIND DRAFTING challenging at the beginning.

SOFIA:

It can be challenging and scary. It is exciting, too. Do not worry. It will get easier and easier the more you do it. Remember. God is with you every step of the way!

LIAM:

That is important to remember. Sofia, please tell us how you did the BLIND DRAFT.

SOFIA:

I took the first chunk and read it over three or four times in the source text in the national language. This only took a few minutes. I thought about how I would say it in our mother-tongue language. Then I closed the source text so I could not be tempted to look at it. I wrote out the message of the chunk in our mother-tongue language. I used paper and pencil. Other people type their BLIND DRAFT using a computer or tablet. The idea is to write or type the message as naturally as possible. At this step, you do not worry about complete accuracy.

LIAM:

I remember I was concerned about not being able to look back at the source text while I was translating. I wondered why this was the method. I asked the people training our translation team and they told me looking at the source text can keep the translation from sounding natural in our language.

SOFIA:

We saw that happen with our translation team. When we first started working on our translation, all of us wanted to look back at the source text when we were drafting. Later we read our translations. The ones where we looked back at the source text sounded unnatural. These passages were translated from the source text word for word. They were difficult to understand. It is important to translate the idea of the passage into our mother-tongue language in a natural way. Doing a true BLIND DRAFT results in a translation sounding the way we talk with each other.

LIAM:

The first draft will never be perfect. I always leave something out or add something not in the Scripture. I make mistakes. That is okay. There are many checking steps later in the process. So, if mistakes are made, they can be corrected on the checking steps.

SOFIA:

I found it helpful to write on the first line of my paper and leave the next few lines blank. That seemed wasteful, but I was glad to have the extra space for adding corrections later. I did not put in the verse numbers in this step; we do that in a later step.

LIAM:

Those are the first four steps of the translation method. First you CONSUME by reading the passage of Scripture. Then you VERBALIZE, telling the message of the chapter out loud in your mother-tongue language. Next you CHUNK the chapter into smaller portions. Then write out the BLIND DRAFT in your mother-tongue language retelling the message of your passage.

SOFIA:

You may want to give these four steps a try. Select a portion of Scripture and try translating it into your mother-tongue language. It may take several tries at using this method before you feel comfortable with it. Be patient with yourself. You are learning something new. Like learning anything new, this may take some time, but the results will be wonderful! You will be able to help bring Scripture to your people in your mother-tongue language!

LIAM:

That is a great reminder, Sofia. Next time we will talk about the four checking steps in the translation method. Those steps are designed to help assure your translation is accurate, clear and natural. We look forward to sharing more with you!

SOFIA:

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.