

Broadcast #3 – Checking Steps 5-8

LIAM:

Welcome back! This is Liam and Sofia sharing the story of how God's Word came to our people. Thank you for joining us.

SOFIA:

Our story began with our concern for having God's message in our mother-tongue language. Liam and I can speak and read in 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 his church's project to translate the Bible. They were trained using a method called MAST, which stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation. Their team had worked together to translate the whole New Testament in just one year. Their community was excited to get God's Word in their mother-tongue language.

SOFIA:

This was God's answer to our prayer. We learned more about the method. We got a team together and, in a year, we translated more than 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. There are eight steps. Last time we concentrated on the first four steps. We will review those steps now. Then we will move on to the last four steps.

SOFIA:

Step one is CONSUME. You read the chapter of Scripture in the source text to make sure you understand what is being said.

LIAM:

Step two is VERBALIZE. You tell the message of the Scripture passage out loud in your mother-tongue language. You tell what it is about, including the main points.

SOFIA:

Next is step three – CHUNK. You go through the Scripture passage and divide it into smaller pieces. Usually those smaller pieces are one to four verses long.

LIAM:

Then you are ready for step four, the BLIND DRAFT. Read the first chunk several times. Then turn the source text over and write or type the message of the chunk in your mother-tongue language. Then move on to the second chunk, then the third and so on until you complete the chapter.

SOFIA:

You now have a drafted chapter of Scripture. We want to make sure it is accurate, clear, and natural. We want our mother-tongue translation to be the best work it can be to present God's Word to our people.

LIAM:

The next four steps help to assure quality. These steps ensure the translation is accurate, clear and sounds natural in your language and culture.

LIAM:

When you finish the BLIND DRAFT, you do step five. It is called the SELF-EDIT. Sofia, tell us more about how you did the SELF-EDIT.

SOFIA:

Yes, Liam. I think that will help. Here is what I did for the SELF-EDIT. I read what I had drafted, one chunk at a time, while looking back at the source text in our national language. I was not looking for my translation to be word for word. I was checking to make sure I had not left out anything important or added something not in the source text.

LIAM:

What did you find?

SOFIA:

I found I had left a few things out. For example, in one of the chunks I left out the name of a town. I also found I added a few things not in the source text. I needed to remove them.

LIAM:

I want to point out neither of those things are unusual. The SELF-EDIT is not meant to be a test. If you find things to correct, you are not failing. In fact, it is the opposite. You are making sure your translation is the very best it can be.

SOFIA:

There are a few more things do check in the SELF-EDIT. Ensure the translation sounds natural in your language. Also, never delete the draft and start over because you will lose the natural sound of the translation.

LIAM:

Thanks, Sofia. Those are important things to remember to do. Next is step six. It is called PEER-EDIT. This is an edit done with another member of the translation team. You will trade chapters so they will PEER-EDIT your chapter and you will PEER-EDIT theirs. It is helpful to read the translated passage aloud, so you know if it sounds natural and flows smoothly. Compare the newly translated material to the source text to see if they align. When checking, make sure to look for spelling and punctuation errors and for missing or added facts. It is also very important to check that accurate and literal common language terms for "Father" and "Son" are used when referring to God the Father and Jesus Christ. When you have both finished editing and making notes of changes you think should be made, discuss any questions you may have. Then discuss and make any changes to improve the translation.

SOFIA:

Here is an example. Liam read his draft of the first chapter of Mark to me in our mother-tongue language, while I followed along in our source text.

LIAM:

Sofia listened to me read. She was really concentrating. As I was reading, Sofia had a strange look on her face. Something did not make sense.

SOFIA:

In chapter one, verse seven, Mark writes John the Baptist feels he is not worthy to even kneel and untie the strap of Jesus' sandals. I was not sure what this meant. Our sandals do not have straps or ties. They just slip on. If we translate it word for word, people will be very confused.

LIAM:

This figure of speech was clear to those in Mark's time but is not clear to us. We learned figures of speech should be translated accurately but being sure the meaning is clear.

SOFIA:

In this case, John the Baptist was trying to tell those listening to him Jesus is much more important than him. Even though John was receiving a lot of honor as a teacher, he was stating that Jesus is greater.

LIAM:

We discussed this figure of speech. We wondered if we had a similar one to communicate the same meaning. We could not think of one. Our choice was to keep it word for word and ask our pastor for his advice.

SOFIA:

That was a good decision. The team decided to translate this figure of speech as John being not worthy to do even the simple, lowly task of helping Jesus to remove his sandals. Next is step seven, the KEYWORD CHECK.

LIAM:

Many words and terms in the Scriptures are important to translate correctly and consistently. Examples include proper nouns like names of people and locations, numbers, and important terms. Some of these important words or phrases may be discussed even before you start translating to be sure you are all translating consistently. We want to make sure everyone is using the same words in our mother-tongue language in all parts of Scripture. It is good to make a list of these words available to all the translators and add to the list as new words and phrases are identified.

SOFIA:

This is when we discuss the word's meaning in the source text and the word choices made in our mother-tongue language. We make sure the choices are accurate, clear, natural, and consistent.

LIAM:

The KEYWORD CHECK can be done in a small group or with two translators working together. The checker or checking group will look at the keywords and discuss changes and then make them in the translation. On this step it is important to check that accurate and literal common language terms for "Father" and "Son" are used when referring to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

SOFIA:

Some terms in the national language are common even in our mother-tongue language and can be used in the translation. For some terms you may have to write out what it means. Some terms may be very challenging to translate. There may be times when you want to ask your pastor for his counsel, just as we did when we tried to translate the meaning of John the Baptist's comments about Jesus being much more important than him.

LIAM:

Step eight is the last step. It is the VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK. The purpose is to go over the translated material verse by verse to ensure it is high quality. It is important to treat God's Word with honor and respect, doing all we can to make our new translation a powerful tool for God's message to reach our people.

SOFIA:

The VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK can be done in a small group or with two people working together. For each verse, you look to check four important things one more time. Number one, does the translation sound natural in your mother-tongue language? Number two, do you understand it well? Number three, are all the key ideas in the source text in the national language included in the translation? Number four, is anything added to what is in the source text?

LIAM:

This is the last step before you present your work to the wider audience of the church and your community. You want to be sure the quality of the work is the best it can be.

SOFIA:

Our team chose to meet at a special time devoted to this step because it is so important. We waited until we had several consecutive chapters ready. It helped us hear the flow from one chapter to another and check for consistency. It worked best for our team to translate the chapters back into the national language for the VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK. Then we compared it to the original source text to be sure the message and important points were there and translated clearly. During the edits and checks, we used concordances and Bible tools that we were familiar with already. We also found many great tools like Translation Notes, Keyword lists and a Reviewer's Guide on the bibleineverylanguage.org website where we found our source text. These tools were very helpful for understanding context of scripture and keywords. We will talk more about those tools a little bit later.

SOFIA:

After the VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK was completed for each book there were shouts of praise and singing and dancing among the team. We were so thankful God had enabled us to complete this work!

LIAM:

As soon as we completed a book, we wanted to have some printed copies to share with our church and for people to read. At first, we just copied the neatly handwritten pages. Later we were connected to a website to input the translated books with our laptops and tablets. Then we were able to get a flash drive with the books typed and formatted nicely. We took it to our local printer to make copies. We asked everyone who read or listened to the translation to share their comments about its accuracy, clarity, and naturalness. We made notes of the comments so we could consider ways to improve our translation.

SOFIA:

Now we have finished over half of the New Testament and shared them with our people. We thank God we have been able to be part of this important task. It means so much to our people to be able to hear God's Word in our mother-tongue language.

LIAM:

This is not the end of our story. Next time we will discuss more things we did to help assure the quality of our translation.

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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.