

Broadcast 08 – Checking Steps 7 & 8

BEN:

Hello! This is Ben. Thank you for joining us. We have been learning about all the checking that is done to produce a clear and accurate translation of Scripture into our mother-tongue language. The MAST method – that is Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation – takes this very seriously. Now we are going to hear more about steps seven and eight. Those are the KEYWORD CHECK and VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK. Pastor Fin is with me today. Together, we can explain these steps and demonstrate them for you. Thank you for joining me, Pastor Fin.

PASTOR FIN:

Thank you, Ben. I am always happy to be here to discuss our Bible translation work. The checking steps are very important to our work to translate Scripture. We want to be sure the translation is clear and accurate. Checking helps to assure that.

BEN:

Before we get into all of that, could you share with us a conversation you had with another of our translators recently? She shared something interesting about why participating in the translation is important to her personally.

PASTOR FIN:

Yes, she was telling me she often wondered why Scripture was only available in our national language. Even though she knows that language, it can be difficult for her to understand the meaning. She told me it feels as the words go through her head, but not through her heart the way our mother-tongue language does.

BEN:

Yes, I understand that feeling.

PASTOR FIN:

When she heard ordinary people like her can participate in translation, she was so encouraged. She was so excited that we are able to do this important task for ourselves. God called her to be part of our translation team to make His Word even more meaningful for our people. She told me that hearing the first Scripture portion read aloud in our mother-tongue language was like hearing it for the first time.

BEN:

Thank you for sharing that with us. I love hearing and sharing the stories of all our translators, even though they are not able to join us on the radio. In this program, we are going to concentrate on steps seven and eight of the translation process. Those are the KEYWORD CHECK and the VERSE-BY-VERSE CHECK.

PASTOR FIN:

To get to that point, we must have the first six steps of the process complete – CONSUME, VERBALIZE, CHUNK, BLIND DRAFT, SELF EDIT, and PEER CHECK.

BEN:

Yes, that is right. A lot of work has been done but these two important checking steps remain. Let us start with step seven, KEYWORD CHECK. Could you remind everyone what a keyword is?

PASTOR FIN:

Key words are names, abstract terms, and ideas that are usually difficult to translate accurately, but are very important because they carry so much of the meaning of the passage. They are hard to translate for many reasons; it may be our language does not have a word that expresses that idea. Or it may be our language has many different words that could be used, and we need to decide which one is the best choice. Sometimes it is a difficult theological term, and we want to be sure it is communicating accurately. Once these words are identified, KEYWORD CHECK is the step where the translators work together to make sure each one is accurately represented in the translation.

BEN:

Who decides if something is a keyword?

PASTOR FIN:

Every translator and checker have the responsibility to identify keywords. Many translators circle them as they work on their self-edit. A keyword can be identified any time during the checking process.

BEN:

Now please tell our listeners what happens after a keyword is identified.

PASTOR FIN:

As you recall, at the translation event there was a time each day to discuss these words with the team and with other teams. Since we are away from the event, we talk with a few of the other translators to get their opinion about the best options. If a keyword is especially difficult, we discuss that word when the translators get together with the pastors for meetings with the churches.

BEN:

Please share an example with us, so our listeners can have a better understanding of what happens once a keyword is identified.

PASTOR FIN:

We were working on the translation of the book of Mark. The translator working on chapter 3 came to verse 22, which reads, “The scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, ‘He is possessed by Beelzebul’ and “By the ruler of the demons he drives out demons.” This was a challenging verse for the translator. He wanted to be sure that he translated the message clearly and correctly. He circled the words “scribes” and “Beelzebul” as key words. When he worked with another translator doing the KEYWORD CHECK, they consulted several references to understand these words. With the tablets they were using, they accessed notes about the Unlocked Literal Bible, on the website “bibleineverylanguage.org”. Here they learned “scribes were officials who were responsible for writing or copying important government or religious documents by hand” and “in the New Testament, the term translated ‘scribes’ was also translated as ‘teachers of the Law.’”

BEN:

That is interesting. What did the translators decide to do?

PASTOR FIN:

These two translators felt the important thing to communicate was these were teachers of the Jewish law who were criticizing Jesus. They were men with authority. People believed what these men said. With that in mind, they went on to understand why the name Beelzebul was being used and why he was

called the ruler of the demons. Again, they checked with the notes about the Unlocked Literal Bible. Here, they learned Beelzebul is another name for the devil.

BEN:

It seems clearer to me just to call him the devil.

PASTOR FIN:

These translators would agree with you. They did not want to lose the original name because that is what the scribes used. So, they decided to translate it as “Beelzebul, the devil.” Here is how they translated the verse.

“Some teachers of the Jewish laws came down from Jerusalem. They accused Jesus, saying that He was possessed by Beelzebul, the devil. They said that He was able to drive demons out of people because of power given to Him by the devil.”

BEN:

Thanks for the demonstration of the KEYWORD CHECK. It shows how important it is to consult other sources.

PASTOR FIN:

Yes. The resource these translators used – the ULB Translation Notes -- is available online at bibleineverylanguage.org. There are other resources, too – checking the verse in other translations, checking Bible commentaries, or checking with a pastor all are options to use at the KEYWORD CHECK.

BEN:

Thank you for sharing those examples. It sounds like those two translators were both happy with the solution. What happens if the translators and checkers are not sure what the solution should be, or if they disagree with each other?

PASTOR FIN:

That does happen. That is a time when consulting additional resources can help. If people feel very strongly about their point of view, a mediator may be needed. And, of course, prayer is always helpful. It is important to remember that we all are working toward the same goal of having a clear and accurate translation of Scripture for our people. We must remember to be humble and listen to other’s thoughts when there are disagreements.

BEN:

Sometimes I wonder if maybe it would be more efficient just to go to the expert right away and let them make the decisions.

PASTOR FIN:

Sometimes it can feel that way. Sometimes it feels that we are wasting time in discussing these differences. It is important, though, that the translation reflects our people and that it is clear and understandable for us in our mother-tongue language. We are the experts in that! So, we need to be involved in working through the difficulties and coming to a resolution. We want it to be our translation, done for us and by us. And we learn so much through these discussions. God gives us the opportunity not only to serve in this great task, but to receive new insight through our service.

BEN:

You are right, Pastor Fin. Those are very important points. We do want it to be our translation. Let us move on now to step eight, VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK. Remind us how that is done.

PASTOR FIN:

This is the final checking step done by the translators. It requires three translators. One is the original translator who created the draft. He will read the translation to the others. The other two translators ideally will not have worked with the draft-writer on the PEER CHECK or the KEYWORD CHECK. That is because it is beneficial to have someone checking at this step who has not been involved with this Scripture portion before. They can listen and look at it with fresh eyes.

BEN:

Yes, I can see why that would be the ideal.

PASTOR FIN:

As I said, the author reads their translated Scripture portion in the mother-tongue language, verse by verse. After each verse, the second person translates what they just heard into the source language, which usually is the national language. While the second person does that, the third person has the passage in the source language in front of him and checks for the clarity of the translation and that all important points are included.

BEN:

There really are so many checks. Could you give us an example of how the VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK helps?

PASTOR FIN:

Let me share an example that a translator told me about the other day. We did the VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK on the first chapter of Acts. Verse 12 reads, “Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mountain called Olivet, which is near to Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey.” What the translator had written, and the second person had said in the national language, was that “On Saturday, they went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives.” The person checking the source material had a question. It reads “a Sabbath day’s journey,” that person said – not that the journey had happened on the Sabbath. Both the author and the second person did not see a problem, but the third person was insistent. So, they checked with a pastor who was present. The pastor explained that the term “a Sabbath day’s journey” referred to the distance a devout Jew could travel on the Sabbath. It was a very short distance. So, what the verse was trying to say was that the Mount of Olives is very near to Jerusalem, not that the journey was made on the Sabbath. With this new understanding, the author decided the translation needed the change to be more accurate. He adjusted it to read, “They went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is a short distance away.”

BEN:

That example shows the importance of having new people be involved with the author in the VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK, to catch those types of things.

BEN:

Your examples for the KEY WORD CHECK and the VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK have helped demonstrate their importance. When our listeners wonder why we need to have so many checking steps, they can remember the examples you gave and how they improved the translated Scripture for all of us. Could you please close our program in prayer?

PASTOR FIN:

Yes. Dear Lord, thank You for involving us in translating Scripture into our mother-tongue language. Thank You for each of the checking steps that help assure that Your intended meaning is being communicated accurately and clearly. Help us as we work together to be kind to each other as we make comments and suggestions. When others are commenting on our work, help us have open hearts and minds for the possible ways to improve our translation. We pray You will be with all of us this week. Help us with our work. Help us to encourage others to hear Your invitation to join us in the task. We also pray your blessings on those who will hear the translated Scripture. Use the blessing of hearing Your Word in their mother-tongue language to bring them closer to You. Amen.

BEN:

Thank you, Pastor Fin. And thanks to all of you listeners for joining us. We hope this is a fruitful week for your translation work. Your work is so important for us all. We look forward to sharing with you again next week.

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.