

Broadcast 16 – Additional Checks & Revisions

OLIVER:

Hello! This is Oliver. We have shared with you our progress of translating the Scriptures into our mother-tongue language. Along the way, we discussed many ideas to help you with Bible translation. We hope you are encouraged to continue your translation work in your mother tongue language and see great progress.

MARA:

We want to talk now about the quality of the translation, and the revision process. Our project is getting very close to being complete. When all books are translated, we plan to publish the New Testament as one book. Before we do that, we want to make sure we made all necessary revisions and that the text is as good as it can be.

OLIVER:

In earlier broadcasts we explained the checking done during the MAST steps—SELF-EDT, PEER-EDIT, KEYWORD CHECK and VERSE-by-VERSE CHECK. We have also shared about additional refinement done by involving community members.

MARA:

Other refinement can be done by looking for feedback from pastors and other church members who are not part of the translation team. Wycliffe Associates has a resource called the Reviewer's Guide that can be used to check the passages of Scripture that are the basis of essential doctrines of the Christian faith. The Reviewer's Guide can be downloaded from the website bibleineverylanguage.org. This guide shares background information regarding a specific portion of Scripture, including a summary statement of that portion; then gives a series of questions about content, and the answers to ensure essential doctrines are translated correctly. It is in a format to download so each checking group can write out answers, comments and mark the sections completed.

We do this by gathering a group and working through the passages targeted by the Reviewer's Guide. This group has done this as part of a mid-week Bible study. One of our translators guides the Bible study and has brought the responses and feedback to us for review. Also, last month, we arranged for a three-day workshop to use the Reviewer's Guide checking tool with pastors. We went through all portions for each doctrine in the guide and made note of any areas that seemed weak or raised questions. Then our team looked over these notes and improved the text further. We were surprised and thankful that there were very few areas of concern raised. In fact, it took us less than an hour to look through the notes and make corrections.

OLIVER:

That's right. We are thankful to have additional checking done as we continue translating new chapters. Some people wonder how we could get so much done so fast. It is because we were blessed by faithful volunteers who work consistently in their area of the project. By the time we have a new portion translated, the previous portions are ready for our attention.

MARA:

We also make sure to give a copy of our completed texts to the schoolteacher in our village, and we ask her to make notes of any grammar or spelling errors. She is very helpful in providing feedback. We improved our consistency in spelling and grammar in many areas with her help.

Each of these revision steps has helped me to gain confidence in what we translated. We found so few errors. It is exciting and encouraging to listen to new readers as they explain what they understand from the text. To know the translated text is communicating clearly to them is deeply satisfying.

OLIVER:

The steps we take to affirm quality give us confidence that our translation is good and when it is complete in a couple of weeks, we will publish it as one book.

MARA:

I am so excited for that day to come. But what will we do about revisions after it is printed? This is a question we should discuss.

OLIVER:

Yes, that is a good question.

First let's talk about why we would need further revisions. We take so many steps to make sure our work is consistent, clear, accurate, and natural. We explained several of those quality checks. Why do we think it may need further revisions in the future?

MARA:

Well, errors or inconsistencies will come to light as our audience grows. The translation is the best we can make it for now. But we recognize that others know more than we do and may find things we did not see. Others may even have a better way to translate a word or phrase.

OLIVER:

Yes. That is most certainly true. Another reason that revisions may be needed is because languages change over time. I remember at our first MAST workshop the leader said that every language changes over time. He said this is even more true in languages that are unwritten. But he gave several examples of ways that the English language—which was first written very long ago—has changed. Some revisions of modern English versions of the Bible included updating the language to align it with common usage. Our language is a written language, but we do not have a lot of material written in it, so it may change even faster than a language like English.

MARA:

That is a very good point. I can think of ways our language has changed since I was a little girl. Even on our translation team, we differ in the way we say some things. Partially, that is because we come from different villages. But it is also part of the age difference among us. The elders are our grandfather's age. They speak with a different vocabulary than you or me!

OLIVER:

Yes. And that will continue to be true.

MARA:

So, we know that revisions will be needed in the future. How are we going to handle them?

OLIVER:

Revisions are not about changing what the Bible says. We know that God's Word is timeless. No matter how much our way of communicating changes, His message stays the same. Revisions are about clarifying and improving our communication of that message. So, we will always rely on our assessment

guide of qualities to conduct revisions. In the same way, that list of qualities has guided us to this first printing. It will be our measurement for future revisions.

One member of our team has agreed to receive feedback after our New Testament is printed. We created an email for him to receive recommendations from others. We will include his contact information in the back of the New Testament when we print it in complete form. That way people will know where to send questions, comments, and suggestions.

MARA:

Our goal is to create an open channel for feedback. For now, members of our translation team agreed to meet once a year for the next five years and review the feedback we receive. Each year we will consider the feedback and determine if we need to make a revision. We can make changes in the electronic files and post them online for others to print their own revised and updated copies. We will not recreate the audio files for several years unless we find significant errors.

OLIVER:

It could be that some languages already have a translation that is very outdated. For these languages, Wycliffe Associates has a process called REV which means Revise Every Version. That can be useful if we the people feel that a full revision of our translation is needed. This process is explained at bibleineverylanguage.org.

MARA:

We also hope that our translation will be used to create new resources for our community. In an earlier broadcast, we talked about the open license making it possible for others to use the translation in other formats or with new audiences without getting special permission. One example we gave was the schoolteacher's request for a children's version. We hope she—or another teacher—will use the work we have done and revise it to simpler language that can be read and understood by children. The creative commons share alike feature makes our translation accessible for others to use.

OLIVER:

Here's another example of this kind of use of the translated Scripture. One of the musicians in our church has taken passages we translated and is putting them to music so that we can have songs in our language that come directly from Scripture.

MARA:

That is another great way for our people to hear and memorize God's Word.

OLIVER:

Yes, it sure is. We know that over time the quality of our translation will improve. And in the years to come as we get older, we will pass on the responsibility for quality and revisions to other Christians.

MARA:

It is important that we expand our team of revisers to include members of the younger generation. They are the ones who are most aware of language changes. Pastor Fin has suggested in two years we add two younger members to the revision team. These people must be believers who have a desire to uphold God's Word.

OLIVER:

Now that our work is saved on the Wycliffe Associates server, we will also have the capacity to download it and work directly on it to make updates and revisions. Authorized revisers will have access and the ability to do this. This is an amazing benefit of living in a time when technology is so advanced.

MARA:

And that reminds me, finding someone to join the team that has tech experience is a huge benefit. It isn't always possible, but those who can include technology experts on their revision team, should take advantage of this. We are lucky to have Jade and a few other people for this!

OLIVER:

Yes, that is helpful. Another thing to keep in mind is that Wycliffe Associates is continually building their library of free resources. A Bible commentary and Greek lexicon will become available over the next couple of years. These resources can be very helpful in assessing the quality of our Scripture translation.

MARA:

These resources will help us to improve portions of the text where we are unclear or uncertain now.

OLIVER:

We hope this broadcast will help you to think through quality assurance and revisions for your translation project in the future.

MARA:

Thanks for being with us. We enjoy sharing information with you to encourage you and we pray God will help you to use what you are learning. May He bless each of you as you continue your work for Him in translating His Word into your language.

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.