

English summaries

Globalization and Localization in Bible Translation and Language Development

John Watters

During the past 40 years, since the creation of Wycliffe Netherlands, the process and people involved in Bible translation have seen considerable change. We will first review the way Bible translation was pursued in terms of people and process when Wycliffe Netherlands came into existence. We will then consider the various external factors that come to bear on Bible translation over the past 40 years. These factors have led to a variety of changes in people and process and will continue to assert a growing influence on Bible translation into the 21st century. All of this will be set in the context of both a greater globalization and a greater localization of the people and process. Bible translation has seen a growing diversity of people from more and more nations involved while it has also seen an increase in the number of mother tongue speakers taking greater and greater responsibility in the translation process. The resources that can be used to make Bible translation possible are global while the impact of Bible translation will always be local. All of this points in certain directions for the sustainability of Bible translation into the future.

Bible Translation between mission and myth. Thoughts from the sideline

Sake Stoppels

SIL-Wycliffe does not exist to simply produce vernacular materials. These materials are made with the aim of impacting lives. There is a growing awareness within the organization that there is a need to assess how much the materials SIL helps to produce are being used. In their own project among the Onobasulu-people in Papua New Guinea we (Sake and Anne Stoppels-Dondorp) discovered that the interest in the translated books of the New Testament is decreasing. This experience matches with that of many colleagues in PNG. Some, if not many, completed NT translations are in fact not used. The first large survey of Scripture Use in PNG in 2008, in which the use of the Bena-translation was investigated, led to a clear conclusion: the Bena New Testament is not used at all. Fortunately, many other translations are used and fully integrated in the lives of individuals and congregations, but the Bena situation is not an incident. So an important question arises: what causes the fact that translated Bible (books) in oral languages are not used? Why are local language materials not read by those for whom they are produced? Several reasons can be mentioned. Within Wycliffe-SIL eight factors, formulated by T.Wayne Dye, are often mentioned and used in Scripture Use projects. In this lecture I concentrate on the third factor, called 'Accessible Forms': 'Access' in this context means that individuals can read the Bible or hear it read or see it in drama or other communicative arts. If the Scriptures are written, some people must be able to read.

The Scriptures are not easy to read, so a long way is needed to prepare people to read in their mother tongue. My central question is whether Wycliffe-SIL is really willing to pave this road thoroughly. Literacy is an important task within SIL and much time, money and energy is spent on it. However, is that enough to make people read the Bible in their own language?

There is a danger that the Wycliffe-SIL mission in Bible translation turns into a myth if there is no serious consideration of all the situations in which a translated Bible (or parts of it) are not used. Spiritual reasons play a role in the Bible not being read, but in my opinion there should be more attention for just ordinary and normal socio-linguistic principles and patterns that play a role. This lecture is an invitation to do substantial research in this field. The ambitious program Vision 2025 can profit from that research, because it might show that in many languages the necessary socio-linguistic prerequisites are not in place to ensure Scripture Use. Hence, there is not even a need to start Bible translation.

The translation consultant, the translation method, and partnership projects: new developments

Lénart de Regt

I would like to discuss three key developments.

1. The translation consultant is no longer the person who only comes to check the result after a translation has been completed. Meanwhile his role has also become that of

- coach (What are the skills that the translation team needs to develop?)

- trainer (What are the specific areas in which this translation team needs training? We have conducted seminars for translators and exegetical editors in Russia.)

- advisor (Which division of tasks will improve the way the team works together?)

- quality guardian during the translation process (accuracy; consistency; does the team adhere to the translation principles that were chosen?)

2. The United Bible Societies no longer limit themselves to one method of translation. The Bible Society and the team have to make their choice explicit before the start of the translation project. Which set of translation principles is going to be acceptable for the intended users? This has led to a discussion of the ethics of Bible Translation. What is the translator to do with sensitive texts (Psalm 110:1)? How should the culture behind the source text be made part of the translation (1 Samuel 16:3)? Is the rendering of grammatical features of the text (word-order, connectors, for instance in Isaiah 53:4) subject to the same translation principles as the rendering of key concepts?

So what will be expected of the translation team? Should the translation show that the text was originally an act of communication in another time and culture, making the reader an observer? Or should the translation be a direct act of communication with the reader and not read like a translation at all? These things should be decided as much as possible with the prospective users of the translation.

3. More than a few translation projects in which UBS and SIL (and IBT) collaborate, take place in areas where Christians are a small minority. Translators are quite apprehensive about how readers will react to parts of the translation. What does this mean for the checking process? I would like to conclude with a few examples to illustrate this point.

Linguistic research as foundation for Bible Translation

Constance Kutsch Lojenga

Many language communities are still waiting for a translation of God's Word. In places where there are churches because the message of the Gospel came in through another language, we notice that the people very much want to have the Bible in their own language. They try for themselves and do the best they can to develop an alphabet for their own language. The next step is to translate their hymnbook. Until they discover that others have problems reading.

In other cases, a Bible or New Testament has already been translated and printed. People would very much like to use it, but one of the problems is that the text is so difficult to read and understanding. "I would so much like to preach from the Bible in my mother tongue, but I have to read it in French first before I can then start guessing what it says in my own language."

What is happening here? There may be several causes for the fact that the translated Scripture is sometimes difficult to read, but one of the fundamental causes of this problem is that the language has not been adequately studied: the sound system has to be analysed in order to design a good alphabet. In a tone language, the tones must be analysed, and, according to their contrastive function, represented in the spelling system. In daily life, most of us talk fast, and in doing so, we 'swallow' whole syllables. Mother-tongue speakers of an unwritten language are not aware of this. So the grammar needs to be analysed in order to discover all these small grammatical words so as to whether they should be written separately or attached to another word. Documentation of the linguistic aspects of a language is necessary and useful for research in related languages.

Forty years ago, it was commonly accepted that the expatriate Wycliffe/SIL member would do this work himself because the level of education of the local population was often not very high. Much has changed over the past forty years. In many language groups, there are people with a higher education, so that, slowly, the emphasis has changed into collaboration in which both parties, the outside 'specialist' and the mother-tongue speaker work together on these topics. The added value of such an approach is that the mother-tongue speaker becomes consciously aware of the phonological and grammatical aspects of his language, something which greatly enhances the quality and the style of Bible translation.