Lesson 4: The MAST Experience

Part B

Starting a MAST Program

How do we identify potential projects and start a MAST program? First and foremost, there must be an identified and designated church that expresses a need for translation and desires to support this project.

Requirements for implementation vary according to the scope of the project (and there can be many variations of these):

- The two-week New Testament model requires 26 church members who speak the same language and are willing to spend two weeks in the translation process.
- The 40-week model, which has capability of translating into 2-40 languages, requires the following:
    - 2-3 team members within each language willing to translate over approximately 40 weeks
    - 1 church member willing to participate in the translation process at designated times for involvement in checking

Overcoming Language Barriers

Language barriers are obviously one of the biggest obstacles in Bible translation. However, most of the world's people speak more than one language – their mother tongue and at least one "official" language in which business and governmental functions are conducted. This language is often referred to as the Language of Wider Communication, or LWC.

While there are approximately 7,000 languages spoken in the world, there are only a handful of these LWCs. We call these "gateway" languages, because they provide a gateway to translation of scripture into mother-tongue languages.

Working with a source text in one of these gateway languages reduces or eliminates the need for mother-tongue translators to learn English before they can be effective.

For more information on the gateway language strategy, see the Door43 website at the URL shown on the slide.

Defining Translator Requirements

What are the ideal qualifications for translators?

- Listening/speaking fluency in English and/or gateway language
- Reading fluency for scripture, scripture notes in gateway language for source text use
- Typing or some low-level computer skills (mostly for two week model)

Note that, while these qualifications are desirable, they are not required. However, if there is a lack of fluency in the mother-tongue and/or gateway languages, interpreters should be available to provide a path of instruction and checking to the translator.

Assessing People Groups

Before initiating a MAST project, an initial assessment of the people group should be performed for each mother tongue language, answering the following questions:

- How many willing translators are there for the language?
- Does the language(s) have an alphabet/written script?
- What gateway language will be used for a source text?
- How many of the translators are fluent in listening or speaking or writing in their mother tongue? In the gateway language? In English?
- If there are translators that only know their mother tongue, is there a mother-tongue to gateway language or English interpreter available for each language group?

Training the Nationals

The goal of MAST, and indeed the whole idea behind it, is that translation projects are initiated by and belong to the local churches. They provide the translators and many of the resources, with WA providing the methodology and various kinds of help along the way. But we are merely facilitators, with the goal of making the nationals ever more self-sufficient as the project progresses.

Because of this, one of our main roles is to train the nationals. At first we train them in the process itself as they work on a MAST project. We also want to train them in various levels of checking, so that the project can be truly owned by them.

Training the Nationals in Checking

As a facilitator, you can model the following process to train the nationals in checking:

- Checking Layer 1: Check for smoothness/naturalness in mother-tongue. If you are not fluent in the mother tongue, you can guide a native speaker to perform this process.
    - Have the translator read each translated verse to you one at a time.

    - If any verse is not smooth and natural, discuss it with the translator, who should then make the changes.
    - Once all the verses are read through, ask the translator to go to the next layer.
- Checking Layer 2—check for accuracy
    - Have the translator or interpreter orally back-translate the translated text into the language of the checker, one verse at a time.
    - As each verse is read in the back-translation language, the checker should explore the accuracy of each verse:
        - Has any information been left out of the translation?
        - Has any additional information crept in that is not in the original text?
        - Does the translation reflect any misunderstanding of the source text?
    - If there is a question regarding the accuracy of the verse, engage the translator in discussion about what may be needed. You may use any language needed for communication.
    - If you are satisfied with the verse, have the translator note the changes needed if any.
    - If you are not satisfied or have any unresolved questions about the accuracy of the translation, highlight that verse for further discussion.

Adapting MAST Programs

MAST is a methodology that can be implemented in several types of program models, based on the needs of the local churches and the availability of resources. Some of the more common variations are the 40-week small group model, the 2-week large group model, and oral language models. Additionally, you can adapt the methodology to include special requests and to make use of a variety of tools and technologies, and you can even adjust the process while the MAST project is occurring.

All of these adaptations are described in subsequent slides.

Using a 40-Week Small Group Model

Often a local church serves several language groups, or several churches that serve one or more language groups each collaborate on a MAST project. Typically in these cases there are only 2-3 translators for each language group.

In this circumstance, by using MAST methodology each small group can translate the entire New Testament with a goal of approximately 40 weeks.

Using a 2-Week Large Group Model

If a group of 26 translators can be assembled from a single language group, they should be able to translate the entire New Testament in just 2 weeks. The participants are split into groups,

with each group working on a different part of scripture. Each person is expected to translate a certain number of verses per day.

This concept was proven in one of the first MAST projects, which took place in southern Asia in the fall of 2014. Although only half of the 26 scheduled translators were able to attend the 2-week project, they completed half of the New Testament (the four gospels and 1 and 2 Timothy) and took printed copies back to their local churches for further checking.

Using an Oral Language Model

The MAST methodology, using either the 2- or 40-week model, can even be implemented in cases where there is no written language. Translation is done orally and recorded.

In some cases a person who is literate can transcribe the oral translation into writing, which may be the first time that language has been written.

Including Special Needs or Requests

The local church is the ultimate authority over the MAST translation project. Churches differ in their requirements, so the MAST methodology is adaptable to special needs and requests that the local church may have, such as:

- Merging a church check into a wider community check
- Using additional layers of checking, such as a check against original Greek or Hebrew
- Using additional resources for exegesis
- Expanded discussion of important terms because of different dialects of a particular language

MAST has the ability to incorporate any of these needs into the process.

Including Tools and Technologies

The long-range goal of MAST is to align it with other emerging Paradigm 3.0 elements. Any step in the process can utilize partner tools and various technologies. Click each picture to see how MAST functions with each, then click Continue when you are finished.

- Door 43/Open Bible Stories: MAST can make use of open-source gateway language scripture and translation notes. Often the Open Bible Stories on Door 43 are the object of a MAST translation project in order to quickly make the stories from the whole Bible accessible by a language group.
- Translation Studio: Through the development of notes and gateway language scripture, MAST is merging the methodology to function with Translation Studio tools.

- Exegetical software: Checkers can use software such as Logos to clarify the meaning of scripture words and phrases.
- Print on Demand: The translators can have the ability to print translated scripture as needed with equipment provided by WA.

Adjusting the Process on the Fly

Mondays typically do not go well during a MAST project. Everyone is getting acquainted and learning the process somewhat through trial and error. What worked well on a previous project may not work at all on the current one. As a facilitator, you may arrive at the end of Monday feeling overwhelmed and needing to make some changes.

As long as you steadfastly apply the theories, you can make adjustments without abandoning the MAST methodology. Keep in mind the following theory-based guidelines:

- Remember that any instruction that you give must be individualized to the groups or people with whom you are working.
- Give only as much instruction as needed, in short, easily-understood increments, and allow people to learn by participation in the process.
- Be sure to give frequent feedback, praise, and encouragement.
- Enable participants to increasingly take ownership, and limit your participation as this takes place.
- Always keep in mind that each individual has a unique set of personality traits, gifts, and talents that together provide a valuable contribution to the project.

Process Adjustment Example

A recent translation project provides an example of how adjustments can be made on the fly. The team leader was told to expect 27 translators from two people groups, with a goal of translating 10 Old Testament books.

At the last minute one of the people groups cancelled, and although there were 13 translators from the “K” people group, only about 8-10 were able to show up on any given day. Even in the second week of the project, translators were dropping out and new ones were appearing.

To further complicate matters, one of the translators (P.) could neither read nor write. Of the remaining translators, about half were weak in reading or writing. Additionally, the source text was 140 years old, and was written in a language that most of the translators did not know well. They could comprehend only 30-40% of the words.

To set the project up for success, therefore, the team leader immediately set the goal of translating only 3 of the books because that seemed an attainable goal for the two-week event. She also paired a weaker reader with a stronger one, and used P. (the non-reader) as a language

expert to ensure that the translations sounded natural. And because of the low comprehension of the source text, the verse-by-verse check was given more time than usual.

Not only was the goal of 3 books attained, but the translators were able to complete half of another lengthy book. The project was able to use all of the people effectively, so what could have been a failure was turned into a success by making on-the-fly adjustments. The translators were happy with their accomplishments and motivated to continue working after the event was over.

Overcoming Obstacles

Now that you have learned about the MAST methodology, you may be able to identify some problems, or obstacles, that may interfere with achieving the goals of MAST.

One such problem is that there are not enough trained facilitators, which is exacerbated by a lack of training materials. The Wycliffe Associates training department is working to overcome this obstacle by providing such materials for facilitators and translators.

A second problem is the inability of leaders and facilitators to see what is happening in the different groups throughout the process. Since we can't closely monitor each step, we need to trust the process and allow the steps to flow. The various levels of checking should catch any errors or problems with the resulting translated products.

Summary

In this lesson you learned that a MAST facilitator should be humble, a team player, able to follow a plan, flexible, culturally sensitive, and have English ability. Other desirable skills are exegesis, Biblical language, computer, and/or national language skills.

You found that a MAST program begins with a request by a local church, and that the required resources vary according to the scope of the project. You saw how the gateway language strategy helps to overcome language barriers. You learned what is required of translators and how to assess people groups. You also learned to increase local church ownership by training the nationals.

This lesson also described the various ways in which flexibility enables MAST to be adapted to many types of projects. You learned more about the different models for MAST programs that include the 40-week small group model, the 2-week large group model, and oral language models.

You discovered that Mondays are typically chaotic, and that adjustments to the plan may be necessary during a project. Because MAST is based on theories, it lends itself to this type of flexibility as long as you remain true to the theories.

Exercise: Chunking

Next you can practice chunking by dividing the book of Philemon into chunks. Each chunk should be long enough to contain a complete idea, but short enough that you can remember it in order to translate it. Click Continue when you are finished.

Exercise: Blind Drafting

To simulate the translation process, paraphrase the entire book of Philemon chunk by chunk:

- Read a chunk of the book of Philemon.
- While not looking at the original text, write in your own words what the text said. (Although both the original and the draft are in the same language, this simulates the translation step.)
- Repeat this process for each chunk. Do not do any corrections at this point.

Click Continue when you are finished.

Exercise: Self-checking

Compare the draft you have done with the original text.

Did you leave anything out? If so, add any details that you omitted.

During this self-checking process, you should also correct any errors, grammatical or otherwise.

Click Continue when you are finished.

You have completed lesson 4.

Please proceed to Part A of Lesson 5.