

MAST: A New Methodology for Bible Translation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNgUvZsmTQs&feature=youtu.be&t=62>

This video introduces you to a new methodology for accelerating Bible translation called MAST. You'll learn about Wycliffe Associates' vision for Bible translation. You'll find out how MAST fits in with Bible translation methodologies of the of the past, and you'll learn the steps that comprise the methodology.

Vision 2025

Vision 2025 is Wycliffe's vision for Bible translation. It is a plan to translate the Bible into every language that needs it by the year 2025. There are three elements to this statement:

- **How many languages?** There are approximately 7000 languages in the world and around 3700 of these do not yet have Scripture.
- **That needs it:** Who determines what languages need the Bible?
- **By the year 2025:** Is this even possible, given that in all the centuries that translation has been done we have accomplished less than half of the task?

History of Bible Translation

Bible translation began centuries ago. In the 14th century John Wycliffe translated the Bible into his native English language, followed by William Tyndale in the 16th century. Also in the 16th century Martin Luther translated Scripture into his native German language. This effort by individuals to translate the Bible into their own languages is known as the Historical Era of the Bible translation.

You would think that the church would support this effort. However, the established church at that time was very much against translating Scripture into any language other than Latin. They felt that the church's power would be lessened if people could read the Bible for themselves. As a result, translators experienced extreme persecution. In fact, in 1536 William Tyndale was executed by strangling and burning at the stake.

In spite of this persecution, during the historical era the entire Bible was translated into 40 languages, with 27 additional languages receiving at least some Scripture translation.

Paradigm 1.0

Since the historical era the translation world has undergone three paradigm shifts. The first one began in the early 1800's as revival of interest in missions. As part of this movement Bible societies and other parachurch organizations were established to translate the Bible into the languages of places where missionary activity was taking place.

For example, William Carey, one of the founders of the Baptist Missionary Society, is known as the father of modern missions. He traveled to India and translated the Bible into 20 Indian languages.

Missionaries such as Carey would travel to foreign lands and spend many years learning the culture and language of the region where they were sent. They then could begin the lengthy

task of translating Scripture into that language. This can be thought of as paradigm 1.0 of Bible Translation.

Unfortunately, the natives in the locality didn't accept the translations to which missionaries had dedicated their lives. They sometimes viewed it as “the white man's Bible”, and these translations would sit on shelves not being used.

However, by 1982 the entire Bible had been translated into 279 languages, the New Testament into 551 more, and at least some portion of the Bible into 93 additional languages.

Paradigm 2.0

Bible translators began to realize that translated Bibles sitting in warehouses did not accomplish the goal of transforming people by putting Bibles in their hands. So, in the 1980's there began to be a push for greater involvement of native speakers. This was the beginning of paradigm 2.0 of Bible translation.

While translation projects were still directed and funded by outside organizations, the translation itself was done more and more by native speakers. This made sense. After all, the native speakers already know their language and culture. This resulted in wider acceptance of translations and reduced time for completing them.

This accelerated rate of translation resulted in the entire Bible being translated into 471 languages; the New Testament into 1233 more, and another 1002 languages receiving at least a portion of Scripture by 2011.

Paradigm 3.0

The next logical step was for the local native churches to take over the initiation and management of translation projects. This is paradigm 3.0 of Bible translation, which started at the beginning of this decade.

Paradigm 3.0 also benefits from further advances in technology, especially in the use of mobile devices. Parachurch organizations such as Wycliffe Associates now take the role of assisting wherever they are invited to do so, but allowing the local churches to control the work.

Remember when we asked the question earlier, “Who decides?” concerning Vision 2025? In Paradigms 1 and 2, the expatriate parachurch organizations decide which languages receive Scripture translation. They have to prioritize the needs based on such things as the size of the people group and the costs involved. In Paradigm 3, however, the local churches desiring Scripture translation invite the parachurch organizations to help them with the project. This ensures that the translated Scriptures get into the hands of the people groups that most desire them.

Paradigm Comparison

When you compare the paradigms, you can see the following trends:

Paradigm	1.0	2.0	3.0
Translators	Expats	MTTs	MTTs
Management	Outsiders	Outsiders	Local Church
Church Engagement	Separate	Increasing	Integral
Time to NT	~ 25 years	~ 10 years	~ 2-4 years
Cost	< \$2 million	< \$200,000	< \$50,000
Formats	Printed book	Printed, digital, audio	Printed, digital, video, audio, mobile
Legal	Copyrighted	Copyrighted	Free and open
Distribution	Expensive, restricted	Expensive, restricted	Free and unrestricted
Target	NT	NT, some OT	What church wants
Quality (who decides?)	Parachurch	Parachurch	Local church
Time Horizon	~ 2150	~ 2037	????

- Mother tongue translators, rather than foreigners, increasingly involved in translation, with parachurch organizations taking a more advisory role
- Increased role of the national local churches in controlling translation projects
- Reduced time and cost for completing translations
- Increased use of digital media
- Distribution of translations becoming free and unrestricted, instead being expensive and restricted by copyright
- And perhaps most importantly, a greatly accelerated time frame.

It's important to realize that the time periods shown for the different paradigms are the periods where a particular paradigm was the predominant pattern for that era, but it does not mean that this pattern ceased to exist after that time. For example, there are still paradigm 1.0 Bible translation projects in process, although most new ones being started use paradigm 2 or 3 as a model.

What Is MAST?

Now that you understand how Bible translation paradigms have changed over the centuries, you are ready to learn about MAST.

MAST stands for Mobilized Assistance Supporting Translation. It is a new strategy to serve and support Christians as they work to translate God's Word into their own language by training them to work as a team.

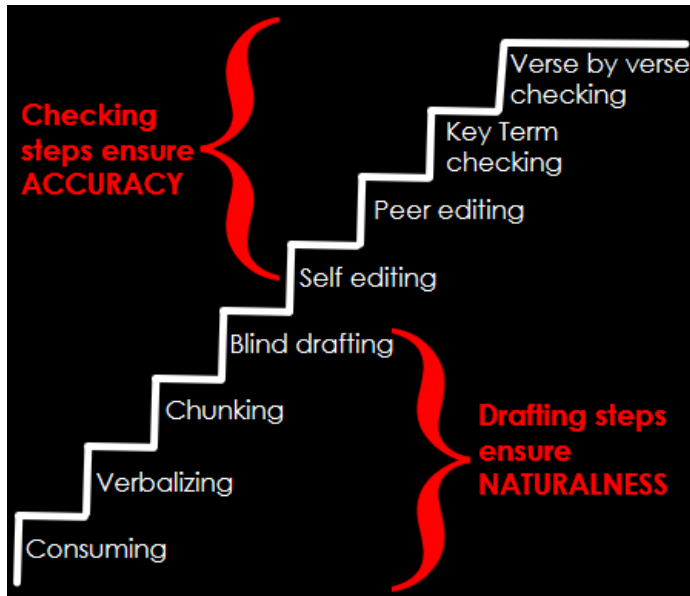
Previously, most Bible translations have been done by a very *small* group of bilingual speakers working *sequentially* through Scripture, translating over a *long* period of time. In contrast,

MAST can engage a *large* number of bilingual speakers working in *parallel* to draft and check Scripture in a much *shorter* period of time.

One key aspect of MAST is that the local churches have final authority over all decisions. We are simply servants to assist them.

MAST Core Steps

The MAST methodology consists of several steps that are performed during a MAST workshop. These steps can be divided into two activities:



- The *drafting* activities produce a first draft of the translation that sounds natural to native speakers.
- The remaining *checking* activities edit and refine the draft to produce a translation that is clear and accurate.

How accurate are the translations done through the MAST process? Dr. John Luton, a professor of Communication Studies who has participated in checking the work of numerous translation projects around the world, says, “The work produced through MAST methodology is excellent! It compares very favorably with texts produced through other methods.”

The first step of MAST is **Consuming**. Consuming text is the first step in the MAST translation process. In this step translators simply read or listen to the text to be translated that day. This can be done individually or in a group.

The second step of MAST is **Verbalizing**. After listening to or reading the text, verbalizing the text to a partner helps the translator better understand what the author is trying to communicate. This could also be done as a group discussion. The goal for this interaction is for participants to fully grasp the big picture of the text, but not necessarily the deep, theological meaning.

The next step of MAST is **Chunking**. In chunking, each translator should divide the text into small chunks that they will be able to remember once the source text is closed. This should be the largest manageable piece that they will be able to re-tell or rewrite in the target language without referring back to the source text.

The size of a chunk varies according to the complexity of the material and the abilities of the translator. For some, a chunk may be a complete story or parable, while others may be able to remember only parts of that same story. For passages with deep theological content, a chunk may be one verse, or even part of a verse.

The last drafting step is **Blind Drafting**. In the blind drafting step, the translator should close the source text and draft a translation of a chunk. This should be done as quickly as possible, without concern for errors.

Why do you think we require them to close the source text? Because when you translate by using the source text directly, you tend to do a word-for-word translation. In contrast, blind drafting helps the translation to be more natural-sounding than a word-for-word translation would be. Clarity and accuracy are ensured by the later checking steps.

The first checking step is **Self Editing** or **Self Checking**. After the blind draft is complete, the translator should compare it with the source text and make any corrections or improvements that are needed, such as adding details that were missed during the first draft. The translator can also check for and correct any grammatical errors. This step enables the translator to spend time in writing that was not allowed in the blind draft step.

The next checking step is called **Peer Editing** or **Peer Review**. In the Peer Review step the translator exchanges the blind draft with another speaker of the target language. The reviewer should compare the translation with the source text, looking for both accuracy and grammatical errors. Peer Review not only enhances accuracy, but also provides an opportunity for individuals with different skill sets to learn from each other.

The next step of MAST is **Key Term Checking**. Checking important terms and concepts focuses on the key terms and ideas of the passage. There should be a list of these, and this step checks the translation to ensure that all key terms are included, that they are translated consistently throughout, and that they are clearly understood.

The final core step of MAST is **Verse by Verse Checking**. Verse by verse checking is a detailed check of text that can be performed by a facilitator or a trained national. Verse by verse checking by a MAST trained individual helps to ensure the accuracy of the translation. Knowing that this detailed checking takes place gives translators confidence that the final output will be accurate. This helps to relieve performance anxiety.

This step usually requires an interpreter who can orally translate the draft text back to the source text language or to the language of the checker. For example, if the checker speaks only English and the source is in language B, the interpreter needs to back-translate the draft text from Language C into English. The checker compares the back-translated text with the source

text or a reliable text in their own language, looking for accuracy of meaning. The checker may perform deeper word studies of key words to ensure that their meaning is accurately translated within the context of the Scripture passage.

Thanks for watching this video and for your interest in MAST. For more information see the Wycliffe Associates website (<http://wycliffeassociates.org>)