



INNOVATION LAB QUALITY ASSURANCE RECOMMENDATIONS

OCTOBER

2023

PREPARED BY:
THE INNOVATION LAB

Official recommendations of the ETEN Innovation Lab, in light of ongoing research, innovation, and new opportunities in Bible translation.

RECOMMENDATION 1: MULTIMODAL TRANSLATION PROCESSES BEGINNING WITH ORALITY AND VISUALITY

Effective and impactful Bible translations must be trustworthy and trusted. Importantly, trustworthy and trusted translations begin with a trustworthy *translation process*. A translation will not be trusted if the translation process is unknown or unclear to the church and community; it is not sufficient to produce a “quality” final product. To produce a trustworthy and trusted translation, the church and community must be involved in the translation process.

For this reason, the Lab recognizes that quality translation *processes* are an important part of quality translation *products*. The lab recommends multimodal processes that include team-based familiarization, internalization and articulation that is spoken or signed. The Lab has observed that multimodal translation processes produce better first drafts, use more authentic and natural language, and allow earlier and easier access to God’s Word by the church and community. For these reasons, **the Lab recommends multimodal translation processes be the preferred methodology for the remaining Bible translation need.**

ADDITIONAL DETAIL

To unpack this, it is important to distinguish Mode and Media. *Mode* is closely tied to the five senses; *media* are the ways the message is expressed. In translation, **mode refers to the translation process and media refers to the translation product.**

Multimodal translation <u>processes</u> include:	Multimedia translation <u>products</u> include:
Sound: oral/aural speech and music genres	audio, digital audio
Sight: written text genre	print, digital print
Sight: gestures, sign genres	video: sign language
Touch: performance genre	theatre, performance, film
Touch: verbal touch for the blind	braille

Historically, Bible translation has focused on media end-products such as print books or digital audio. Our recommendation is for multimodal processes from the very beginning. This is a shift of focus from end-products to processes.

Our experience has shown that beginning translation with ‘oral and visual processes’ allows the church and community to contribute through all stages of translation. ‘Oral and visual translation processes’ incorporate sound through audio Scripture and commentary; sight through pictures, video, and text; and touch through performance, storyboarding, and modeling.

Multimodal translation processes allow for deeper and more meaningful engagement in translation by the church and community and, thus, more thorough review and revision, as well as greater ownership and use. Even in highly literate communities, there are important advantages to a multi-modal translation process, including:

- **Multimodal processes lead to better first drafts.** A key reason for this are the oral and visual stages of familiarization, internalization, and articulation where translators listen to and experientially engage with the Biblical text at the meta-narrative, discourse, and word levels. This produces deeper understanding of the meaning and, thus, better translation that is trustworthy and trusted.
- **Multimodal translation processes tend to use more authentic, natural language, which results in translations that are easier to understand and more appealing.** This is because passages are translated as a whole, not phrase-by-phrase. Translators are thus less constrained by the grammar and form of the source and are able to use local discourse and syntactic features. Furthermore, multimodal processes allow each language to express its own melodic patterns of stress, accent, and intonation. “The qualities we appreciate in good storytelling, poetic expression, and the rhetorical power of our languages are the same qualities we expect in quality translation. It makes sense then that Scripture would reflect multimodal language use.” (Floor, 2023 forthcoming) Such features are difficult to account for in a purely textual translation process.
- **Multimodal translation processes allow communities earlier and easier access to God’s Word.** This is because multimodal translation generally involves more of the community at every stage of translation and is more easily incorporated into social and cultural practices and events for oral cultures. It also moves more rapidly because multimodal translation processes do not depend on the development of orthographies and literacy, and reflect the everyday use of language in the community

Importantly, this recommendation speaks only to the translation methodology, not the format of the resulting translation. Churches in oral communities, for various reasons, frequently opt for both an oral and a textual format for their Bible translations.

RECOMMENDATION 2: EMPOWER THE CHURCH FOR QUALITY TRANSLATION

The global church is empowered for quality Bible translation by processes that are rooted in their experience and expertise. "As the church is called to participate with God in His mission of making Himself known, Bible translation is primarily a ministry of the church. It is, therefore, expected that the church will give leadership to the planning and implementing of Bible translation programs." (ETEN Innovation Lab Charter, 2020)

Empowering the church requires quality assurance processes that enable translation at a pace and scope that support church ministry goals.

The Lab recommends that the church is empowered for quality translation when...

- **The local church is at the center of decision-making, resourcing, and quality assessment processes of Bible translation programs in locally relevant ways.** In places where the local church is young, church-planting networks and nearby missional churches may be expected to serve and equip as the local church as it grows in its understanding of Scripture and capacity for Bible translation.
- **The church leads and is involved in every stage of translation, including authentication.** The translation process must (1) serve the church's needs, (2) be clear and accessible, (3) be flexible enough to adapt to local needs while still ensuring quality. When these criteria are met, the church and community can easily participate in translation.
- **The local church knows the variety of expertise that is available through the global church and Bible translation agencies** to contribute to quality assurance in translation and is able to access that for its training, mentoring, capacity building and other needs. (see Additional Detail below for more discussion)
- **Tools and resources necessary for translation are freely and readily available.** Biblical and translation resources, as well as technology tools help the community discuss and understand the meaning of Scripture. "Freely" speaks of the cost to the end-user and open licensing. "Readily available" means that the tool can be easily found (e.g. via internet search) and easily used.
- **Translated Scripture is in use early.** Church and community feedback are critical for ensuring quality and reinforcing local ownership.

ADDITIONAL DETAIL

The global church is blessed to have trained and experienced experts to serve the local church in Bible translation. Examples of such experts include Translation Consultants, Translation Advisors, Linguistic Consultants, Ethnomusicologists, and many others.

The church is best served when global church experts **focus on growing the church’s capacity for and expertise in translation and its ongoing review and revision.** When global church experts are invited by the church, their best service is as **advisors, trainers, encouragers, and mentors throughout translation rather than primarily as end-stage translation checkers.**

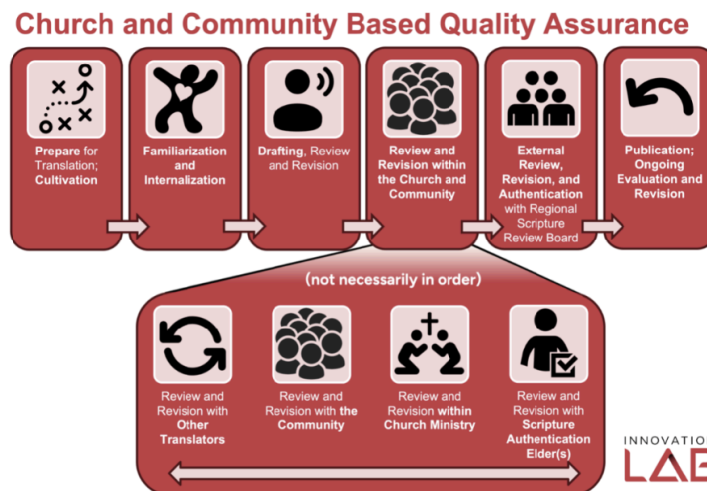
RECOMMENDATION 3: ITERATIVE QUALITY ASSURANCE BY THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Bible translation has always been an iterative process. Each successive revision improves upon the quality of the former. It is not uncommon for English translations to offer updates every 20 years. In fact, at least one major English translation has the goal of regularly updating to ensure that it speaks to each new generation.

Quality translation is only possible when the church and community have capacity to correct errors or adapt as the language changes. For this reason, **the Lab recommends that church and community based iterative quality assurance methodologies and progressive publication be implemented in all remaining Bible translation projects.**

This will require additional focus on growing the church’s capacity for ongoing review, revision and affirmation of the trustworthiness of translated Scripture. As the church has grown and strengthened around the world, so has its ability to revise translations or undertake new work with less dependence on outsiders.

The illustration below describes one process for church and community based quality assurance. Notice that the final publication stage points back to ongoing evaluation and revision.



RECOMMENDATION 4: MEETING THE ALL ACCESS GOALS IN CHURCH BASED BIBLE TRANSLATION

The [ETEN collective impact alliance](#), including each of its Bible translation and resource partners, are committed to seeing “all people gain access to God’s Word in a language they can clearly understand by 2033.” This “All Access Goal” (AAG) helps to prioritize ETEN’s investments and energies on the least reached and least served.

The All Access Goals (AAG)

- Languages estimated to have a speaker population greater than 500k have access to a **full Bible**
- Languages estimated to have a speaker population of greater than 5k but less than 500k have access to a **New Testament (or equivalent)**
- Languages estimated to have a speaker population of less than 5k have access to **some portion of Scripture (at least 25 chapters)**
- And, the world’s top 100 most strategic written languages have 2 Full Bible Translations

ETEN measures progress toward the AAG on [ProgressBible](#). In the established models of Bible translation, a language’s All Access Goal is marked “Goal Met” when the appropriate portion of Scripture has been translated, checked, and approved for publication.

However, in Church Based Bible translation, marking a “Goal Met” is more complex:

- **Quality assurance is iterative and publishing is progressive.** As noted in Recommendation #3 above, the church will continue to improve their translations over time.
- **The translation process includes use of the translation.** Church based translations are often used by the church even while they are “in progress”. This is an important part of testing the translation and also of iterative quality assurance.
- **The clear milestone in the established models of a translation being consultant-checked and ready for publication cannot be assumed in Church Based Bible Translation.**

In light of this, the Lab recommends that when all of the following five factors are true for any Church Based Bible translation project, its All Access Goal may be marked "Goal Met". (A more full discussion is available here: [What does "finished" look like in CBBT?](#))

1. **The translation produced by the lingual church (the element of the global church that speaks a given language) is "text complete"** or "audio complete" or "video complete", by which we mean there is at least something translated for every verse of the stated scope. For example, if the scope is a New Testament, then every verse of the NT has been translated, without reference to the actual (and often unknown) trustworthiness of the translation.
2. The church is implementing an **iterative process** that provides for ongoing improvement and revision of their Bible translation. See the Innovation Lab recommendation for "[Iterative Quality Assurance by the Church and Community.](#)"
3. The church is **connected with other churches and leaders in a network** (or family of churches) that speaks at least one shared Strategic Language and can help provide support and ongoing training, as needed. This ideally includes other lingual churches involved in Bible translation, as well as people who are experienced in different aspects of the mission and translation work of the church. These could include application of translation principles, exegesis, theological formation, etc. The objective is to ensure that each lingual church is not isolated, but is rather connected in appropriate, constructive ways to others who are able to help them in the ongoing work of translation and revision toward ever increasing trustworthiness.
4. **The translation is in active use within the lingual church for discipleship and Kingdom impact**, together with any other translations understandable by the community. This provides an additional element of review through theological reflection and interaction with their translation in comparison with the meaning in translations in other languages.
5. The church is **equipped with Biblical and translational resources in languages they understand** (as per ETEN's Strategic Languages Initiative) and **Bible translation technology** that is effective for them and that results in Kingdom impact.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can Church Based Bible Translation (CBBT) work where the church is not yet established?

We recommend reading "[From Unreached to Established](#)" by Tim Jore for a fuller response. See excerpts below:

"Instead of starting with Bible translation, strategies for reaching unreached people groups often involve the use of evangelistic media that communicate the Gospel through Bible stories in languages that are understandable. Evangelists and church planters may work with those who are receptive to the Gospel, using a language of wider communication to translate and confirm the usability of stories in the vernacular. Once a church is planted, the focus becomes establishing the church and developing the leaders. As the church grows in maturity, Bible translation occurs as a co-requisite to the spiritual formation of the church, and proceeds commensurate to their capacity for understanding (as described above)." (Jore, 2018, p22)

"As a lingual church studies the Bible and begins to translate the Scriptures, their capacity for understanding will (usually) increase as well, which improves their ability to translate with excellence—a virtuous cycle of increasing spiritual maturity and excellence in Bible translation. The objective is to build up the capacity of these leaders for faithful interpretation and teaching of sound doctrine, and *there is great urgency to achieve this without delay*. But this is different than merely achieving the fastest possible time to completion of a Bible translation, as in the following case study..." (Jore, 2018, p20)