



Wycliffe Today

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**TRANSLATION
MYTHBUSTERS**

**SUMMER
2017**

In this edition we investigate:

- » Are translators introverted nerds?
- » Is Wycliffe only for linguists?
- » Are translators lone ranger superheroes?
- » Who are the translation experts?
- » Isn't it easier to just teach everyone English?
- » Do all translators have linguistic backgrounds?

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Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

70 Graham Road

Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097

ABN 22 004 705 953



www.wycliffe.org.au

www.facebook.com/wycliffeaustralia

Enquiries: Editor, *Wycliffe Today*

Ph: (03) 9712 2777

E: communications@wycliffe.org.au

Contributors: Barry Borneman, Debbie Conwell, Jeremy, Mark & Anne, Craig Schneider, Sharna Steinert, Deb Tan, Leng Te, Saul & Rebecca Thurrowgood, W & J.

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Missions Interlink

Member of Bible Agencies Australia

Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

National Office

70 Graham Road,

Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097

ABN 22 004 705 953

Ph: (03) 9712 2777

Fax: (03) 9712 2799

Email: info@wycliffe.org.au

www.wycliffe.org.au

Editorial from the CEO

After 35 years in Wycliffe, I still get a kick out of people's surprise when I introduce myself as the CEO of Wycliffe Australia. I don't fit the mould of the perceived typical Wycliffe worker. I'm not a details person and I laugh a lot. My academic background is in training, literacy and development, not linguistics or translation. Similarly, many of my colleagues in Wycliffe also evade the stereotype.



In this edition, we investigate a few recurring myths about Bible translation and the people who make up Wycliffe.

Each community we are connected with is unique, as are the languages, cultures, circumstances and a myriad of other factors. There are however several commonalities that bind us together: the high value we place on minority languages, our clear affirmation and celebration of multilingualism, and the priority placed on relationship building. We also believe in the indispensable place Scripture should play in the life and faith of believers and the community.

We trust that in reading this edition of *Wycliffe Today* you will know us just a little bit better and encourage those who might be considering a more direct role in Bible translation. There is a place for all types in the Bible translation movement.

BY: Barry Borneman

Congratulations Bethel!

Bethel
Funerals

Wycliffe Australia celebrates with Bethel Funerals its 20th anniversary. Established by Wycliffe as a way to generate funds for missions work while ministering to grieving families, Bethel has since given over AUD\$2 million to missions whilst serving over 9,000 families.

Emily Willetts, Bethel support recipient and manager of Wycliffe Retreats says *'I appreciate knowing that there is a not-for-profit organisation like Bethel who shows true compassion and Christ-like care to those experiencing a very difficult time. I'm also greatly encouraged knowing that Bethel as an organisation believes in what Wycliffe does and partners with us by supporting our members financially. They enable me to play my part in serving God and others here at the National Centre.'*

MORE

Go online to www.bethelfunerals.com.au

Wycliffe
Bible Translators

NSW/ACT

Ph: (02) 8014 6487

E: nswro@wycliffe.org.au

QLD

Ph: (07) 3256 1803

E: qldro@wycliffe.org.au

TAS

Ph: 0455 476 292

E: tasro@wycliffe.org.au

VIC

Ph: (03) 9712 2720

E: vicro@wycliffe.org.au

WA

Ph: (08) 9243 0486

E: waro@wycliffe.org.au

SA

Ph: 0418 675 422

E: saro@wycliffe.org.au

MYTH #1: Translators are introverted, linguistic nerds.

MYTH #1

VERDICT: PLAUSIBLE but not exclusively

Debbie Conwell: *Translation mentor with 10 years of experience in Solomon Islands*

A good translator does need to be a details person because you need to consider every verse for readability and clarity: what it really means, the best words or phrases to use, consistent spelling, the punctuation and the format.

But there are many different types of translation projects, including working one-on-one, or working with a cluster of languages in a team where you share ideas and the workload.

There are also many aspects of 'translation' that require many different skills - for example, coaching and training, managing people and finances, reporting, and implementing creative ways to use Scripture so it will be accepted and used. If God is calling you to translation, there is a place for you, even if you're not a linguistic nerd!



W and J: *Translation and literacy consultants with 52 years of experience in South Asia*

It is true that translators tend to be on the introvert end of the spectrum: folk who are happy to sit at a desk (or computer) for hours on end, usually with one language assistant.

But that was in the days of 'legacy' projects, where the other-tongue translator (OTT) carried almost the whole responsibility for exegesis and writing/typing the translation. These days in our part of the world, where there is already a church in many groups, and with educated believers appointed to do the actual translation, the picture is very different.

With the increased use of mother-tongue translators (MTTs) we now have an advisor/facilitator who oversees the MTTs and does a lot of the exegetical work, as well as provides encouragement and management to the MTTs. That role is to relate to a translation team, not just one individual. So the 'extrovert' skills of encouraging, guiding, team leading (or facilitating) are vital.

Mark and Anne: *Translation advisors with 27 years of experience in Mainland South-East Asia*

For the hard work of linguistic analysis, Bible exegesis and reviewing translation, it helps to be a person who can sit at a desk, who loves investigation, understands linguistics and has good focus. But there is far more to a translation team than the translator at the desk. In fact if that is all you have, the translation runs the risk of getting bogged down in detail, not connecting with the community, and not ever getting finished because it is 'not good enough'. We have seen that happen.

Each translation team needs a person who sees the big picture, loves connecting with community or church leadership, is passionate about seeing how the Scriptures can be most impactful when heard, engages in community checking, is able to manage the project finances and reporting, and provides leadership to keep the project moving.

MYTH #2: Translation projects take place in remote areas

MYTH #2

VERDICT: PLAUSIBLE but changing

Mark and Anne: 27 years of translation experience in Mainland South-East Asia

There are still remote places to work and many of the people groups without Scripture are living in inaccessible places (often due to politics or religion). However in our part of mainland Asia much of the work is being completed by mother tongue translators (MTTs) who come to a central location - usually a regional town - to work. For security reasons they cannot work in their villages or even their own country. Also our language teams cannot live with the community, so we operate several centres close to the border regions where translators can be trained and work safely and securely. And yes we have good electricity and internet in those places!

Perhaps the hardest issue we have seen regarding location is children's education, especially if the team is not able to manage home schooling. In those cases a number of teams, including ourselves, have had to locate in a large regional city with international schools and then the translation advisors have had to travel frequently to meet with their MTTs near the border. That can work well and is one way to get the job done.

W and J: 52 years of translation experience in South Asia

That indeed used to be the norm. In 1967, we asked the provincial governor for advice on what village we should go to for research on Godavari (pseudonym), expressing the hope that it would not be too remote as we had a new baby. He nominated a village about 4-5 hours walk from the town and nearest hospital. Other teams had to walk days to get to their village location.



PHOTO BY PETER BROOK

But these days things are very different. In a country where there has been civil war and security concerns, almost all the work is done in major cities, with the translation teams gathering there from their remote villages to work in a translation office.

Types of translation projects

Single language (54%)

This is the translation model most people think of, where a Wycliffe member works with a team of mother tongue translators (MTTs) and others to produce a translation in one language. In future, the percentage of single language projects is likely to decrease as we see a shift towards other models.

Cluster project (28%)

The Wycliffe member facilitates a group of MTTs from different languages that are often but not always related. A cluster project may be based on linguistic, geographical or strategic factors.

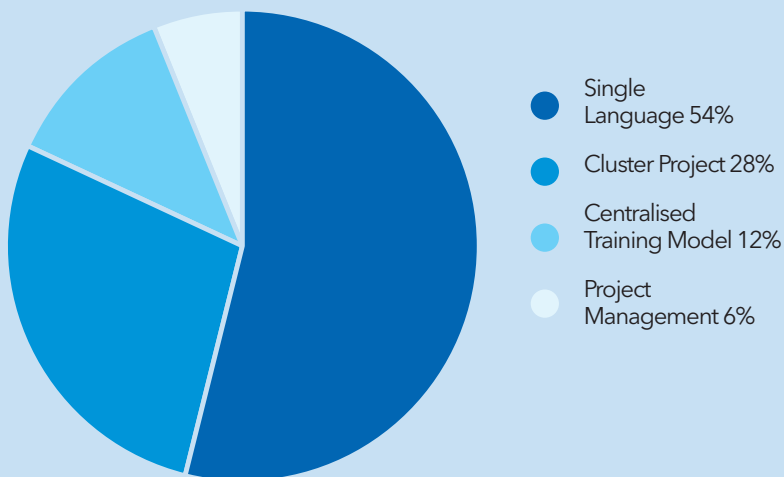
Centralised training model (12%)

The translation project is managed around regular, centralised training events, where the MTTs work together on translation as well as learn more about translating. It often requires project funding for travel and accommodation costs.

Project management (6%)

The Wycliffe members are involved in an administrative and project management capacity for several language programs. For example, one of our members is managing 13 projects (with a total of 33 languages involved) in Uganda and Tanzania; another one of our members oversees 92 language projects across 10 countries!

Types of Wycliffe Australia Bible Translation projects

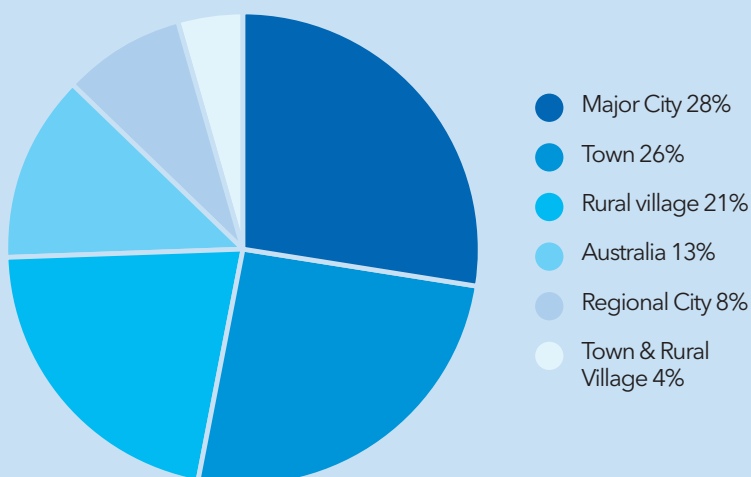


Wycliffe Australia member locations

For those directly involved in translation, the decision of where to live is as unique as the circumstances of each project. But this is not merely an issue of personal preference or convenience. The driver is to be where they can best build strong relationships with the community they are working with. Ultimately, it is about people.

Even for cluster projects, Wycliffe Australia members are still encouraged to build deeper relationships with one particular community whilst facilitating translation with others. Some of our members who work remotely from Australia or a different location are able to do that because they initially spent a good length of time living with the people with whom they are working.

Location of Wycliffe Australia members directly involved in Bible translation





MYTH #3: Translators are lone ranger superheroes

MYTH#3 VERDICT: BUSTED

Jeremy: *Completed year-long linguistics course at SILA, with the view to get involved in translation work*

When I began studies in translation principles in 2016, I realised I had this image that I would be going as the hero to translate something for the community. I thought that while one or two others might chip in with the translation at some point, I would still be the main man. I've learnt that actually, the locals are the experts in their language. My role is really to assist them in the translation and help them to be better translators than I could ever be.

MORE To find out more about the linguistic course at SIL, visit www.silaustralia.org.au

MYTH#4 VERDICT: BUSTED

MYTH #4: Wycliffe translators go into a community as the language and translation experts

Is the far-travelled Wycliffe missionary 'the one' who will gift the local people with God's Word in their own language? Who are the real translation experts?

Meet Pastor Joshua Jimmy Iona, called out of a witchdoctor heritage to serve the Lord Jesus at age 16. He was the first member of his family to become a Christian. He eventually attended a local Bible school and became a pastor in Tanna (Vanuatu).

Most of the people in his community did not understand the wording of the available Bislama or English Scriptures. 'If you don't understand God's word,' he said, 'you're serving an unknown God.'



PASTOR JOSHUA JIMMY IONA

Joshua was passionate about sharing the Gospel with his family and was inspired by the translators he met to translate God's Word in the language of his home community. So he dedicated 14 years to working with Vanuatu Bible Translators (VBT), providing language insights to complete the New Testament in his local dialect, Nata. He is currently the Vice-Chair of VBT.

'People hear God's Word clearly, accurately,' Joshua said. He now sees first-hand how his people come to enjoy a deeper relationship with Jesus, who transforms every sphere of life in new ways pleasing to God.

Joshua has since trained in an English immersion course through Wycliffe Australia. This has equipped him to communicate and preach cross-culturally with greater boldness, bringing God's Word to more people of Vanuatu.

So just who is the translation expert here? Praise God we can support Bible translators such as Pastor Joshua, who have the insight, skills and longing for their people to receive God's Word in the language that touches their lives most profoundly.

BY: Craig Schneider

MORE To read another great story about God's work in Vanuatu, visit wycliffe.org.au/kalite

GIVE Support local translators like Joshua through Wycliffe's Next Step Development initiative. Go to wycliffe.org.au/nextstep/ OR fill in the Response Form

MYTH #5: Teaching English is easier or more effective than translating into the mother tongue



SAUL AND REBECCA THURROWGOOD

MYTH #5 VERDICT: BUSTED

Learning English as a second, third or fourth language is not an easy task.

SIL Australia instructor and translation mentor Debbie Conwell says, *'The more you interact with people the more you understand that there are some things in English, if it's not your own language, that are really hard to grasp.'*

Saul and Rebecca Thurrowgood are involved in sign language translation projects. *'If you can teach them enough English to understand it well enough, it will still mostly just go to their head and not really speak to their heart,'* Rebecca said. *'God is like family. He's supposed to be intimate with us, and we need to understand him intimately. It's so hard to do that in a language that's not our own.'* Many in the Deaf community can't access written English enough to understand the Bible, so it is important to do sign language translations. *'They understand it and finally get so many concepts just because it is their language.'*

Saul added, *'It's exactly the same for sign languages as it is for spoken languages - they communicate and understand in their language much better than they could if they go and learn another language.'*

Jeremy, who studied applied linguistics with SIL Australia, originally asked, *'Why don't we all just wear the same clothes and eat the same food? It would be a lot easier and so much more efficient.'* But Jeremy has learned that God has set things in place so that we have diversity of language and culture, which God chooses to speak through.

BY: Sharna Steinert

MORE

This is an abridged version. To read the full version visit wycliffe.org.au/english-myth

MYTH #6: Wycliffe is only for linguists

MYTH #6 VERDICT: BUSTED

In our recent survey, over 1 in 4 current Wycliffe members claimed to be (broadly) working in the same field as their previous careers before Wycliffe.

Others have commented that whilst they had undergone training to do what they are currently doing in Wycliffe, their previous skills and educational background have come in handy.

Kathy says, *'I always thought a BA degree, majoring in Aboriginal Studies, French and Social Policy was incoherent, until I became a literacy worker in Cameroon, where they all help!'*

This list shows just some of the previous careers our Wycliffe members have had.

Accountant	Disability support worker	Pharmacist
Administrator	Dog trainer	Photographer
Agricultural research manager	Electrician	Plumber
Aircraft engineer	Farmer	Podiatrist
Air traffic controller	File clerk	Power station operator
Artist	Food technologist	Purchasing officer
Bank teller	Geologist	Radio announcer
Barista	Graphic designer	Retail manager
Bricklayer	School teacher	Scientist
Business owner	IT programmer	Scuba instructor
Campsite manager	Librarian	Software engineer
Chef	Mariner	Statistician
Chemical engineer	Medical laboratory technician	Stonemason
Child care worker	Member of parliament	TV producer
Cleaner	Midwife	Violin teacher
Computer programmer	Occupational therapist	Welfare worker
Corporate trainer		Youth worker
		... and more!

ASK

Want to know if your background can be put to use? Ask us how you can find your fit in Bible translation! Email info@wycliffe.org.au

Translation bloopers...

Working in translation is a remarkable, satisfying, challenging job that I love. It's serious and life-changing work but sometimes the process provides some funny moments.

Sometimes the right word is just so hard to find. We were working through the minor prophets and every time the translator came to a word describing a kind of weapon, he made an action. In the end, exasperated, I said I simply can't put that into the translation. I needed a word! After that, whenever we came to that word (especially when we got tired) we both did the action, laughing!

Another time, I was checking the translated version of Amos about a battle in Israel. In the middle of the narrative, some fighting men appeared on a ship, which was curious since the battle was on land. I looked at some different source texts and discovered the source of the problem: it mentioned 'fleet-footed soldiers' (Amos 2:15), and you know where the dictionary would direct someone with the word 'fleet', right?



DEBBIE CONWELL AND JONAH ANAMA, BILUA TRANSLATOR

I found a passage in 1 Kings 13 highly amusing - right before we changed it - when an old prophet called his sons to 'saddle the donkey' which came to be 'put the boots on the donkey'. It now reads 'get the donkey ready' which is less interesting but closer to the idea, if you have no word for 'saddle' and no idea what it's for.

BY: Debbie Conwell

Translation Mentor in Solomon Islands

PRAY

Please pray for those working in translation, that the results of their work will well reflect the message spoken by the original writers as they were 'moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1:21).

*Melai Bangara ta o ereke ileileamaquli ko ngavingavi ko taku poso kale (Bilua, Solomon Islands)
But God has made everything beautiful at its own time. (Ecc 3:11a)*



PHOTO BY ELYSE PATTEN

Time to Celebrate! Upcoming Scripture Dedications

We have two New Testaments ready for dedication that have been a very long time coming. The personal and community hardships and sacrifices crossing 35 years are now behind us. It is time to celebrate!

Lewo New Testament dedication (Vanuatu)

Dedication date: 2 March 2017

Length of project: 35 years

The Lewo translation project was SIL's first translation project in Vanuatu. It is part of a three language cluster project - something quite new to the translation world at the time. Lewo is the first of these projects to come to fruition.

Ross and Lyndal Webb (Wycliffe Australia members) have been typesetting and recording the translations, as well as doing Scripture Engagement activities in the language groups. One down, two to go!

Bantoanon New Testament

(+ Genesis & Exodus) dedication (Philippines)

Dedication date: 6 April 2017

Length of project: 35 years

The Bantoanon translation project has involved a team of contributors over the years. Heather Kilgour and Ruth Gordon started things off, then were joined by Gail Hendrickson and Young Rye Ma. After a pause in the project in the 1990s, Heather returned to continue alone for 9 years before marrying - and completed the translation with her husband Dr Stan Crossley.

We celebrate the people who accepted God's call to serve in this capacity, and also thank their supporters who journeyed with them. May God use these translations to grow his Kingdom here on earth.

MORE

We will feature these dedications in upcoming editions of Wycliffe Today. Stay tuned!