



Forum of Bible Agencies
INTERNATIONAL

Basic Principles and Procedures for Bible Translation

The following statement on “Basic Principles and Procedures for Bible Translation” is subscribed to by all member organizations of the Forum of Bible Agencies International. While the Forum agencies recognize that, depending upon the particular translation situation, these principles and procedures are often applied in different ways, this statement serves as the common set of principles and procedures under which member agencies carry out their translation activities.

As member organizations of the Forum of Bible Agencies International, we affirm the inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures and commit ourselves to the following goals.

Concerning translation principles, we endeavor insofar as possible:

1. To translate the Scriptures accurately, without loss, change, distortion or embellishment of the meaning of the original text. Accuracy in Bible translation is the faithful communication, as exactly as possible, of that meaning, determined according to sound principles of exegesis.
2. To communicate not only the informational content, but also the feelings and attitudes of the original text. The flavor and impact of the original should be re-expressed in forms that are consistent with normal usage in the receptor language.
3. To preserve the variety of the original. The literary forms employed in the original text, such as poetry, prophecy, narrative and exhortation, should be represented by corresponding forms with the similar communicative functions in the receptor language. The impact, interest, and mnemonic value of the original should be retained to the greatest extent possible.
4. To represent faithfully the original historical and cultural context. Historical facts and events should be expressed without distortion. Due to differences of situation and culture, in some passages the receptor audience may need access to additional background information in order to adequately understand the message that the original author was seeking to communicate to the original audience.
5. To make every effort to ensure that no political, ideological, social, cultural, or theological agenda is allowed to distort the translation.
6. To recognize that it is often necessary to restructure the form of a text in order to achieve accuracy and maximal comprehension. Since grammatical categories and syntactic structures often do not correspond between different languages, it is often impossible or misleading to maintain the same form as the source text. Changes of form will also often be necessary when translating figurative

language. A translation will employ as many or as few terms as are required to communicate the original meaning as accurately as possible.

7. To use the original language Scripture texts as the basis for translation, recognizing that these are always the primary authority. However, reliable Bible translations in other languages may be used as intermediary source texts.

Concerning translation procedures:

8. To determine, after careful linguistic and sociolinguistic research, the specific target audience for the translation and the kind of translation appropriate to that audience. It is recognized that different kinds of translation into a given language may be valid, depending on the local situation, including, for example, both more formal translations and common language translations.
9. To recognize that the transfer into the receptor language should be done by trained and competent translators who are translating into their mother tongue. Where this is not possible, mother-tongue speakers should be involved to the greatest extent possible in the translation process.
10. To give high priority to training mother-tongue speakers of the receptor language in translation principles and practice and to providing appropriate professional support.
11. To test the translation as extensively as possible in the receptor community to ensure that it communicates accurately, clearly and naturally, keeping in mind the sensitivities and experience of the receptor audience.
12. To choose the media for the translation that are most appropriate for the specific target audience, whether audio, visual, electronic, print, or a combination of these. This may involve making adjustments of form that are appropriate to the medium and to the cultural setting, while ensuring that the translated message remains faithful to the original message.
13. To encourage the periodic review of translations to ascertain when revision or a new translation is needed.

Concerning partnership and cooperation:

14. To organize translation projects in a way that promotes and facilitates the active participation of the Christian and wider community, commensurate with local circumstances. Where there are existing churches, we will encourage these churches to be involved in the translation and to carry as much responsibility for the translation project as is feasible.
15. To partner and cooperate with others who are committed to the same goals.

See also the separate statement by the Forum of Bible Agencies International on 'Qualifications for Translation Consultants' which outlines standards for translation consultants that are recognized by all member agencies, laying a basis for the sharing of translation consultants.

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