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Ladders and Wheels: Comparing Metaphors for Bible Translation in the Context of Sustainability

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Abstract

Different underlying metaphors may be used to think about Bible translation activities. Such conceptual metaphors highlight certain aspects and hide others. Bible translation has often been conceptualized through a LADDER metaphor, with a beginning, endpoint, and linear steps to reach that goal. However, in the current context of Bible translation movements, with increased emphasis on sustainability and engagement, and supported by technological advances, alternative metaphors may lead to new insights. This paper explores some implications of LADDER-thinking, and suggests some benefits of reconceptualizing Bible translation activities with a WHEEL metaphor, where the emphasis is on continuing movement rather than "reaching the top." The metaphors are compared in the contexts of drafting, publishing and distribution, training, planning, and overall engagement with Bible translation movements.

Keywords

Conceptual metaphors, Bible translation, movements, sustainability, engagement, highlighting, hiding, conceptualization, LADDER-thinking, WHEEL-thinking, messaging

1. Introduction

When international organizations support Bible translation amongst local communities, what do they think they are doing? This paper investigates metaphors (specifically of "ladders" or "wheels") that may shape such

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missiological engagement, whether consciously or subconsciously, and considers some implications. It follows Lakoff and Johnson (1980), who argue that what we say often reflects "conceptual metaphors," through which we understand abstract target domains in terms of more straightforward, embodied, source domains.

Such metaphors affect how we problematize situations (Reddy 1979). They send our minds down certain channels when identifying challenges and searching for solutions. Thus, if we are influenced by the ARGUMENT IS STRUGGLE metaphor,[1] we think one side of an argument must "give in," or both sides should "call a truce." The conceptual metaphor naturally highlights certain aspects of the situation and hides others (Kövecses 2002). The ARGUMENT IS STRUGGLE metaphor highlights the conflict of opposing ideas, and hides the possibility of developing some greater synthesis from differing perspectives, which may be clearer with the metaphor AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING.

In the context of Bible translation, what source domains are reflected as we talk about the activities involved? How do they problematize the situation, and what aspects do they highlight and hide? This paper will look specifically at the source domains of LADDERS and WHEELS, comparing their usefulness for thinking about Bible translation today. Exploring alternative conceptual metaphors may reveal hidden assumptions and lead to new insights.

Three significant factors in the current context are sustainability, technology, and engagement. First, sustainability is a high priority for all international development today, including Bible translation. The United Nations has set the contemporary international agenda by adopting seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015), using the word "sustainable" to emphasize "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987, 8). Sustainability is also central to the Wycliffe Global Alliance "Philosophy Statement" for Bible translation programs, which defines it as "the capacity to continue to fulfil one's purposes for a long time," so that sustainable impact relies on organizations developing "commitment, responsibility, capacity and ownership of the Bible translation and other development programs continuously into the future" (Wycliffe Global Alliance 2015, 12). SIL International also made sustainability a central topic at its 2012 International Conference, affirming a "vision for sustainability in language development and translation" and "a commitment to support locally driven initiatives that lead to sustainable outcomes" (SIL International 2012, 4). Again, the emphasis is on "long-term viability" and activities that become

[1] As is customary in the literature, conceptual metaphors and domains are represented in small caps.

"woven into the fabric of community life." Given this emphasis, are the metaphors through which we conceptualize Bible translation helpful for problematizing something that continues into the future as part of community life, highlighting (rather than hiding) issues of sustainability?

Second, technological advances over the past ten years (especially the saturation of mobile technology) have radically changed the context for Bible translation, making it easier to use audio and visual media and bringing new opportunities for producing, distributing, and checking translations. Again, do our conceptual metaphors for Bible translation activities fit well with the realities of the digital age?

Finally, the current context emphasizes engagement, whether that is engagement with God, with communities and stakeholders, or with Scripture. Missiological reflection by the Wycliffe Global Alliance positions Bible translation as an aspect of engaging with God in his mission, to bring blessing and peace in relationships with God, creation, other people, and ourselves (Wycliffe Global Alliance 2015, 4). Thus, taking part in Bible translation involves engaging with God, but also with each other; transformation is "built on communities of participants, not on the work of an individual." These communities need to be "cooperating with one another and recognizing their vulnerability through working interdependently rather than self-sufficiently," in order to "increase the potential of the community for greater long-term engagement and success" (8). Do the source domains we use to think about Bible translation highlight this kind of engagement of multiple partners with each other and with God?

Since any discussion of what "we" think is inevitably subjective, I should explain my background. From 2000 to 2015, I worked with the Papua New Guinea branch of SIL (SIL PNG), an external resource partner supporting Bible translation. Initially, I helped other expatriate staff achieve linguistic targets and move on to the next stage of their translation work, but over time my role changed towards training and supporting mother-tongue translators, either through teaching or through coordinating training programs. My own understanding of Bible translation is shaped by the Papua New Guinean context and my experiences there, and this paper reflects that journey. Although many examples therefore come from the philosophy and practices of Wycliffe or SIL, I hope the discussion is also relevant to other situations.

2. Ladders

2.1 Structure and mappings

In my first attempt to explain Bible translation to supporters, I showed a ladder with various stages written on the rungs, from initial language learning

and alphabet development through to published Scripture. I was subconsciously encouraging them to think about what we do in Bible translation as "climbing a ladder." This is a powerful and productive metaphor to talk about and think about the traditional role of someone involved in Bible translation.

The ladder image here forms what Lakoff and Johnson call the *source domain*. Such source domains have their own structure, which our minds use to problematize and reason about a target domain, inferring solutions based on correspondences between elements in the two domains. For example, if we use a LADDER source domain to conceptualize a Bible translation project, reaching the top of the ladder may correspond to a published New Testament, and we may problematize the situation in an area by counting how many projects have reached "the top" of their ladder, and describing which "rung" various other projects are on and how much work is still needed.

The structure of the LADDER source domain comes from conflating two significant embodied *image schemas* (Johnson 1987): the SOURCE–PATH–GOAL schema and the UP–DOWN schema. These schemas form in our minds from early childhood as a result of similar recurring bodily experiences, and then shape the way we think about other situations.

First, in the SOURCE–PATH–GOAL schema, the structure consists of a beginning, an endpoint, and a path to move from one to the other, including a scalar component of how far has been travelled. In the LADDER instance of this schema, the beginning is on the ground, the goal is at the top, and scalarity is progress upwards. However, a similar structure can be seen in other images based on the SOURCE–PATH–GOAL schema. For example, the 2012 Wycliffe Bible Translators "Road to Transformation" promotional video compared Bible translation to a "roadmap with checkpoints" going through various "steps of translation" to a final destination. The video explained that destination in terms of spiritual freedom that can only come after these checkpoints have been passed, asserting that "the road to spiritual freedom is long and winding" and that "when you arrive at the end of the road . . . lives change, hearts transform, God's word becomes flesh and dwells among them for the first time ever, giving access to personal freedom and the life-changing message of Christ." This road to transformation is summarized in Figure 1.

Although it is a positive thing to reach the destination here, that value is not inherent in the structure of the SOURCE–PATH–GOAL schema by itself (someone can be on the "road to ruin," for example). The LADDER domain adds an extra valuation by conflating the SOURCE–PATH–GOAL schema and the UP–DOWN schema. Since most English speakers (and many others) hold the conceptual metaphors UP IS GOOD and DOWN IS BAD (Johnson 1987, 123;

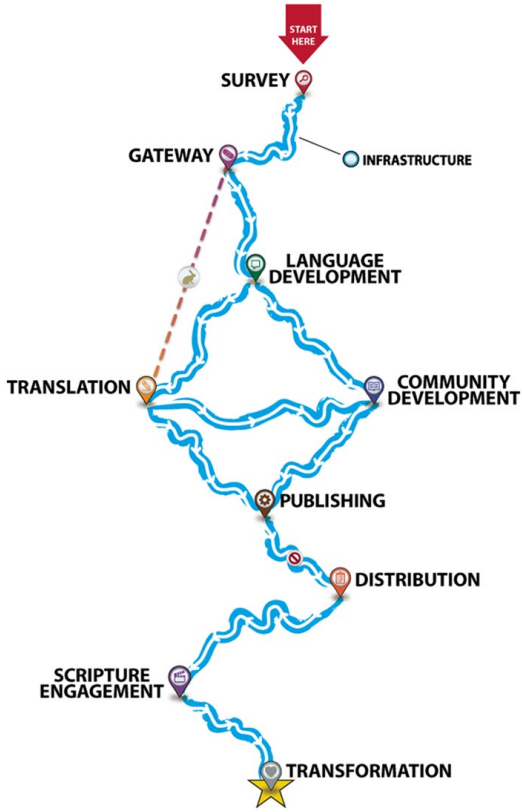

Figure 1. The "Road to transformation"

Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 14–21), progress up the ladder is good. Remaining stationary or going down is not. Thus, the LADDER structure gives a beginning, end, scale of progress, but also a valuation of that progress.

If we use this structure from "climbing a ladder" to understand "doing Bible translation," these mappings are typically involved:

BIBLE TRANSLATION IS CLIMBING A LADDER

person climbing the ladder	→	those involved in Bible translation
ladder itself	→	"Bible translation work"
bottom of the ladder	→	start of Bible translation work
top of the ladder	→	end of Bible translation work
rungs on the ladder	→	stages to go through in Bible translation work

Here, "Bible translation work" is very general, since the precise stages are less important than the overall conceptual structure, and may differ from context to context. For example, in a traditional print-based project directed by an external organization in a community with little prior language development, the rungs may include language learning, developing an orthography, investigating grammar, training colleagues, drafting a translation, checking the translation, literacy training, publishing portions, Scripture engagement, and so on, as in the "road to transformation" graphic. For a project directed by a local translator with limited previous education, the rungs may differ somewhat and include learning to use a computer and exploring biblical culture.

The exact nature of the beginning and end points is also less important than the fact that such points exist in the structure. That is, this is a bounded process. However, where this image conceptualizes external involvement in Bible translation, the bottom of the ladder may be the time when the external participant gets involved, and (in some contexts) the completion of a published New Testament may be the top, with this achievement being the one most closely measured and greatly celebrated. With this paradigm, attention may be drawn to new externally resourced teams "beginning" a translation program, and those "completing" a New Testament may receive the most organizational recognition in public events, publications, and statistics. Progress has been understood as passing through stages between these endpoints.

2.2 Inferences, highlighting, and hiding

Conceptual metaphor theory claims that we use the source domain structure to make inferences about the target domain. With the basic mappings to the domain of Bible translation given above, and our real-world knowledge of climbing ladders, this metaphor could lead to a variety of inferences, including:

- There is a top to the ladder, so there is an end to Bible translation work (it can be "finished").
- The rungs of a ladder need to be climbed in order, so there are stages that must be passed in a generally linear order to finish Bible translation work (unless you "skip a step" or two).
- A ladder is fairly rigid, so there is limited flexibility in the stages you need to include or the order in which you pass through them.
- The ladder is static; it does not interact with or respond to the one who is climbing it.

- People climb ladders purposefully to reach the top, so those who "complete" Bible translation work have done well, those who do not "complete" have not.
- Climbing ladders tends to suggest individuals or small groups, rather than multiple inputs.

In terms of problematizing Bible translation, a LADDER metaphor encourages us to ask:

- What do we need to do first?
- What level have we reached?
- When will we reach the top / finish?

That is, the LADDER metaphor highlights the existence of different stages to complete in a linear sequential order, the purposeful action of the participants, and a fixed end goal. When we think about some of the major components of Bible translation work, such as financial and personnel resources, training, the local church, or language programs, these are all components that come in at various stages of the work (and we can argue whether they should be there at the beginning, middle, end, or all throughout), but all work towards climbing the ladder to reach the endpoint (an example is given in Figure 2).

The LADDER metaphor is very productive for thinking about Bible translation tasks, especially by giving a roadmap for those from time-oriented and task-oriented cultures who want to "complete" something (Robinson 1998). However, it hides certain elements. Fundamentally, it hides questions about what happens after someone reaches the top of the ladder, and how that relates to all the climbing that went on before. It also hides the way the task itself flexes, moves, and changes in response to those interacting with it. Further, the rigidity of the domain hides the possibility of different streams working together, and minimizes the value of activities that do not lead to the set endpoint (perhaps Scripture engagement, audio recordings, literacy, or discipleship, depending on the specific ladder in question). As the Wycliffe Global Alliance philosophy notes, "promoting an externally pre-determined strategy" undermines the goal of listening "to the community and other partners so that program initiation, relationship development, planning and implementation will advance in response to inspiration from [God's] Spirit" (Wycliffe Global Alliance 2015, 6).

Although people may not use the word "ladder" very frequently, "LADDER-thinking" is pervasive and underlies several ways of speaking about

Figure 2. LADDER metaphor for Bible translation

Bible translation. If someone "finishes the translation" in a certain language, LADDER-thinking is being used to conceptualize the task, and we know they have reached the top rung. When we talk about the "remaining task" in an area, we are using a preconceived LADDER metric with a definable endpoint, and asking how many rungs remain before we reach the end.

In fact, this ladder-like linear conceptualization of tasks is so prevalent that it is hard to recognize, or to consider other ways to think about activities. However, the ideas of "sustainability" and Bible translation "movements" in which many partners are engaged, force us to try to conceptualize our work in a different way. A "movement" suggests something dynamic, whereas a ladder leads us to think in terms of rigid structures. The word "sustainable" suggests things that continue, or that are enduring: the exact opposite of the fixed beginning and end points that are inherited from the ladder structure. So how could we reconceptualize Bible translation?

3. Wheels

3.1 Structure and mappings

Whereas the ladder is fundamentally a static image, a wheel is fundamentally dynamic: it is designed to move. Whereas a ladder is basically a line with a beginning and an end, a wheel is a circle that can rotate continuously. Wheels evoke different images in our minds. One image to start with is a child rolling a hoop with a stick. Where the ground is smooth, the hoop rolls

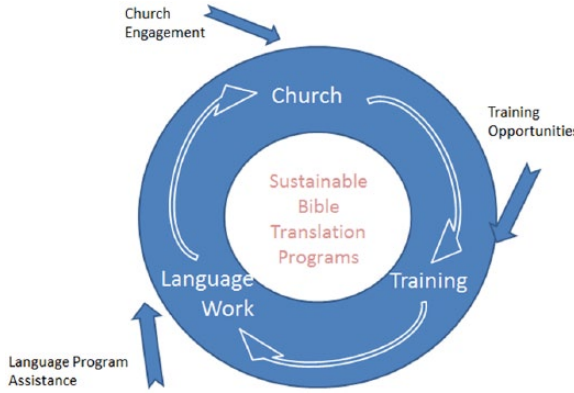

Figure 3. WHEEL metaphor for Bible translation

along easily on its own, but as it slows down or encounters difficulty, a tap with the stick helps to keep it moving.

Using this source domain to understand Bible translation movements, we might have some of the following mappings:

BIBLE TRANSLATION MOVEMENTS ARE ROLLING WHEELS

wheel	→	Bible translation movement
taps from the child	→	inputs to the Bible translation movement
conditions of the ground	→	conditions for the Bible translation movement

A way of thinking about sustainable Bible translation movements based on this structure is shown in Figure 3, presented by Sahl (2013) to model the relationship among the church, training, and language work in a sustainable model for Bible translation in the Papua New Guinean context.

This model emphasizes the church as the key player in Bible translation, being equipped through training to carry out the "language work" of Bible translation, which feeds back into and strengthens the church, motivating others to be involved, find training, and continue. External inputs to help the wheel turn include engaging churches in the task, providing training opportunities, and providing assistance to language programs, perhaps through technical expertise.

Another WHEEL example comes from the Bible life-cycle model adopted by Bible Society (BFBS), which uses a dynamic model of an ongoing process linking translation, production, distribution, literacy, engagement, and advocacy to capture their vision of "circulating" Scripture across the world (see Figure 4).

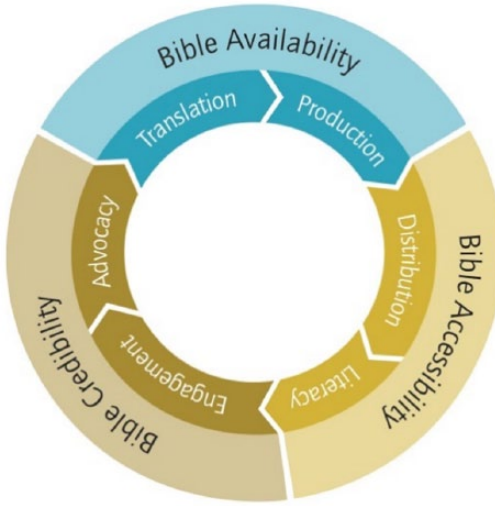

Figure 4. The "Bible life cycle"

Other situations may use the structure of the wheel in different ways; some examples are given in section 4.

3.2 Inferences, highlighting, and hiding

The internal structure of the ROLLING WHEEL source domain enables various inferences when used to conceptualize another domain, including:

- The wheel can turn at different speeds, so the Bible translation movement can progress at different rates. When it stops moving, it becomes unstable and may collapse.
- The wheel can turn with its own momentum or may need varying amounts of external input. This provides a way to conceptualize the amount of external input to a Bible translation movement in different contexts.
- Stretching the stick and hoop model, we could envision hands providing inputs at several points of the wheel at the same time, more like a capstan on a ship being turned by a group of people. This could encourage consideration of different inputs to different parts of the wheel at the same time, rather than progressing through a linear sequence of stages.

These mappings and inferences lead to a different set of questions from the LADDER model, including:

- How fast is the wheel turning? What is its existing momentum?
- Are external inputs needed to start it moving, or stop it from falling over? Or will the degree of external input push the wheel too hard and cause it to collapse?
- What are the conditions on the ground for the movement of the wheel?
- Whose hands are on the wheel providing inputs?
- Are all parts of the rim of the wheel functioning well (without any buckles) so that the wheel can turn smoothly?
- What direction is the wheel heading in?

That is, the model highlights smooth running, ongoing motion, a multiplicity of inputs, and rate of progress.

At the same time, this metaphor hides any specific targets or cut off points in translation work. In contrast to the LADDER model, the scalarity of the WHEEL source domain would most naturally come from how well it is moving rather than how far we have progressed towards a goal. Organizational monitoring with this underlying model would thus focus more on smooth running of the overall system than on stages completed towards an end target, directing attention more at the process than the product in translation work. An organization using this model for its work might be more concerned about whether the outputs of translation work are feeding back into the church and being used, whether they are drafts, oral stories, revisions, or other works, than on completing certain production goals. However, focusing on smooth running and clearing obstacles also hides whether the movement is heading towards a desirable destination or not, and there are potential tensions between these values.

4. Further comparisons and implications

With these differences between LADDER and WHEEL conceptualizations, how could the contrast be applied to various aspects of translation? Research suggests that pervasive conceptual metaphors cohere and recur at different levels of a system (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 87–96; Taylor 2002, 493–99; King 2012, 97). This is true of the LADDER metaphor as it is used to conceptualize the work of Bible translation.

At the highest level, there may be organizational visions to start (or finish) Bible translations in all the world's languages, and strategies to get there are sometimes conceptualized in step-by-step fashion. At lower levels, this task may be broken down into step-by-step Results-Based Management charts to get to the desired impact; step-by-step processes for moving a translation from initial draft through to final publication and distribution; step-by-step

training programs to build the capacity for translators to climb up this ladder; and step-by-step instructions to get to the very first draft of translated Scripture. The following sections show how a WHEEL source domain may stimulate new ways of thinking about these areas, looking in detail at: translation drafting; the process of moving from draft translation to distributed translation; training for individual mother-tongue translators; the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach to translation project planning; and then back again to overall engagement with Bible translation movements.

4.1 Translation drafting

In many models of Bible translation, the initial phase is to create a first draft, which is then put through various checking processes. The drafting process typically involves reflection on the meaning of the source text and on how to express that naturally in a new language and context. The LADDER model is explicitly at the heart of the translation drafting model with which I am most familiar, the "ten-step" process taught to Papua New Guinean translators through the Translators' Training Courses (TTC) at Ukarumpa. However, similarly stepped processes are outlined in standard resources such as Hill et al. (2011, 279–81).

The steps in the PNG course are:

10. Type and gloss the first draft.
9. Copy the corrected version onto a clean sheet of paper.
8. Add helps to make it clear.
7. Check accuracy.
6. Check naturalness.
5. Retell the section, translate it and write it down.
4. Discuss the section as a team.
3. Find and solve any translation problems in this section.
2. Get an overview of this section.
1. Pray.

The LADDER model is helpful since it gives a clear structure to be followed for every paragraph. It can be reiterated frequently during training to ensure that translators do not miss any fundamental step, such as moving straight from reading one source text to drafting in the vernacular without doing the background research that is a necessity for accuracy.

However, the stepped model can consolidate unhelpful LADDER-thinking, such as the belief that when the steps have been followed the translation has been adequately finished (and does not need to be reviewed again). Despite the emphasis on reviewing and checking at various points within the ten

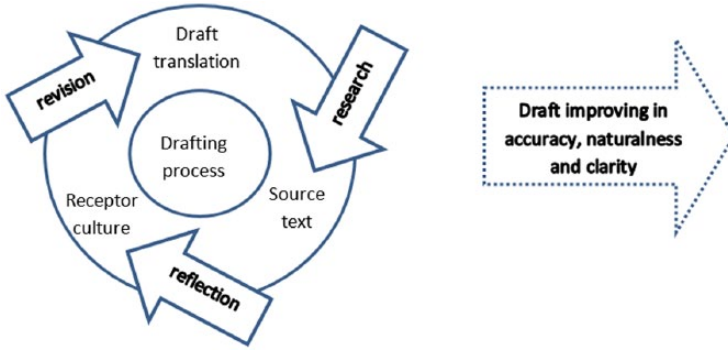

Figure 5. WHEEL-based drafting process

steps, translators can still think they are done when they have read the passage once and feel like they have a clear enough idea of the meaning and are ready to translate. LADDER-style indicators are emphasized by frequent checking of what step the translation team have reached in their progress towards completing the first draft.

By contrast, using the WHEEL to conceptualize the process of drafting could give the model shown in Figure 5, emphasizing a constant cycle of researching the source text (enhancing accuracy), reflecting on the target culture (enhancing clarity and naturalness), and revising the translation.

Although this does not include all the components of the linear model, it does emphasize repeated engagement with the source text world and ongoing attempts to relate that better to the current context. This conceptualization may help translators use critical thinking skills, reminding them to continue searching for the cultural background, underlying perspectives, and logical flow of a passage, rather than assuming they have understood completely after reading quickly. It also reflects a "hermeneutical spiral" (Osborne 1991, 6) in which the translator, as biblical interpreter, continually moves between the two horizons of original context and contemporary context, attempting to interpret the original message for the new context with ever-increasing accuracy.

WHEEL-style indicators could encourage translators to ask, "How many times have we gone round this circle?" or, "Are we continuing to think about the meaning of the source text and how we have translated it?" rather than, "Is this passage completed and is everything ready to move on to the next one?" Of course, this conceptualization hides any "finished" status of a translation draft. However, this is less of an issue with current software for

translation drafting, where it is easy to edit and add notes, compared to more traditional pen-and-paper approaches.

4.2 Translation checking and distribution process

Zooming out from initial drafting, the whole process from first draft to typesetting (for print translations) is also sometimes viewed as a ladder. This is the case in the TTC materials from Papua New Guinea, with the TTC coursebook (SIL PNG and PNG BTA 2013) documenting the steps using the graphic shown in Figure 6. Notice the reference to a *lada* "ladder" in the Tok Pisin translation at the bottom.

Once again, these steps are very helpful for keeping a team project on track, ensuring that all important components are included to reach the final goal. The manual encourages teams by suggesting, "you may also want to use a big sheet of paper and make a wall chart that shows the *steps* for each chapter; that way you can cross off each *step* as it is *finished* and see your *progress*, which will encourage you, and other village people can also see it" (SIL PNG and PNG BTA 2013, 200; emphasis mine). The italicized words show LADDER-thinking, and give explicit encouragement to develop LADDER-style indicators, measuring how far they have progressed.

However, a major issue with this LADDER-thinking approach is the delay in distribution of the translated material, which can only happen when the team reaches the top. This is predicated on what Jore (2015) identifies as a "scarcity" model, in which the publication of Scripture in redistributable format is so expensive that extreme care must be taken to ensure the highest possible quality before this stage is reached. The LADDER model also entrenches a binary, "pass-fail" strategy, with the linear sequence of rungs emphasizing that each one must be successfully negotiated before progressing to the next one. One of the most significant "bottlenecks" to this process is the consultant checking stage, as teams struggle to find a consultant to approve their translation. When the progress up the ladder depends on a single expert gatekeeper, but that expert is not available or does not approve the translation, the "broken rung" can bring the translation process to a "standstill."

By using WHEEL-thinking instead, the process could be conceptualized as in Figure 7. Here, translated material is made available as soon as possible, for different people to interact with. Following that interaction, revisions are made and the modified translation is once again made available. This model provides a simple metaphorical conceptualization for Jore's "ongoing, iterative, 'abundance-mentality' translation process" (Jore 2015, 6).

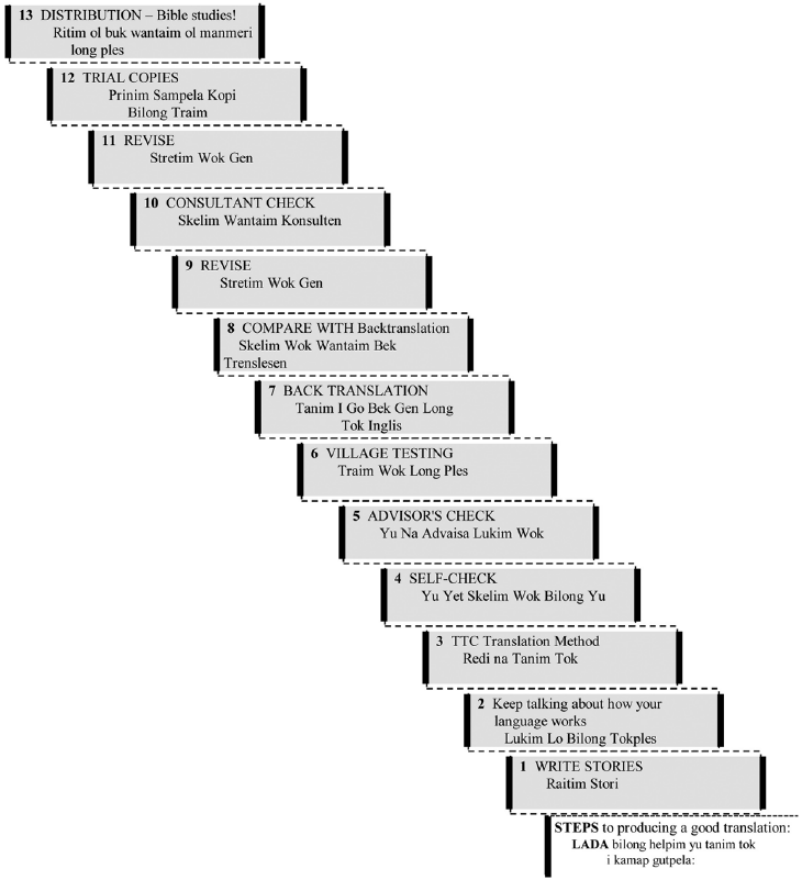

Figure 6. "Steps" to a good translation

Whereas LADDER-style indicators focused on how far we have progressed up the ladder to final publication, WHEEL-style indicators focus more on the process:

- How widely are we distributing translated materials?
- How many people, and what kinds of people, are engaging with the materials?
- What level of engagement are they showing with the materials?
- Are people providing suggestions for improvement following their engagement?
- Are revisions being incorporated into the ongoing revision?

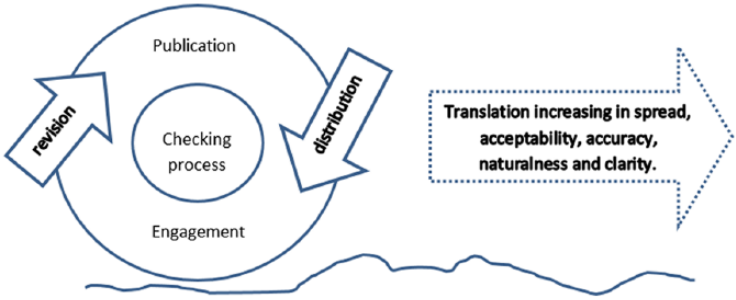

Figure 7. WHEEL-based checking and distribution process

That is, the wheel is turning well if the translated text is being read by an increasing number of people, they are providing feedback, and that feedback is being incorporated into the revision. This encourages using different ways to distribute translated material: for example, through Bluetooth and SD cards or through social media on the internet. WHEEL-thinking also encourages consideration of the conditions on the road on which the wheel is turning. Different obstacles could hinder the onward movement of the wheel, problematizing the situation and suggesting solutions. For example, are denominational or inter-group tensions preventing engagement by certain groups? Are technological difficulties (computer failure, lack of power, internet capacity) hindering the distribution process?

Noticeably, this conceptual model hides the significance of a highly trained consultant as external gatekeeper to allow the translation to proceed to publication, allowing focus instead on local empowerment and the potential engagement of a wide (and increasing) number of reviewers. Further, whilst the fixed endpoint of the LADDER model suggested the possibility of reaching "perfection" in translation, the wheel moving forward captures the more realistic idea of improving in "excellence" (Jore 2015, 5–6). However, it does not remove the role of trained experts in reviewing translations. Such people still play a vital part in quality control, and can still be an explicit component giving input to the turning wheel. This model just reconceptualizes their role so it is no longer that of gatekeeper giving final validation before translated material is distributed.

4.3 Translator training

Translator training is another translation-related process potentially conceptualized through LADDER-thinking. In this model, a translator progresses through a series of training courses, attaining a series of qualifications

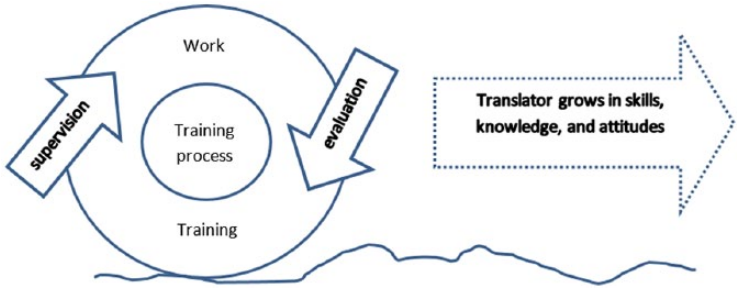

Figure 8. WHEEL-based translator training process

or prerequisites for certain roles. For example, within SIL PNG, mother-tongue translators were required to take six biblical studies courses, and then undergo a series of practical sessions, both observing and being observed, before they could qualify as translation consultants. Once again, the process is very clear and well structured to ensure that essential skills and competencies are built into the translators' lives. However, LADDER-thinking can encourage the mentality that completing courses as they progress up the rungs of the ladder is sufficient for quality work. Further, it can encourage people to think that when they have attained a certain target they have "made it to the top" and do not need to continue developing. These beliefs are further strengthened by funding structures designed to help people climb the ladder. For example, funding may only be available for people to train as consultant interns, but not for ongoing professional development as a consultant, or funding structures are tied to individual language programs and do not allow for consultant development activities of those who serve the programs.

A WHEEL-based approach to training may start as simply as the diagram in Figure 8, which is designed to model formal training scenarios in which training courses are separated from ongoing translation work.

In this model, translators attend training courses and workshops and return to work in translation projects. Within those projects their work is evaluated to see what further training is needed, or whether they need to retake courses, to consolidate those competencies. The WHEEL-based conceptualization for this eventuality means it is not considered a "step backwards" (as in the LADDER model), but rather a chance to retake a course and glean more understanding on the second time around, and to develop a greater ability to pass on those competencies to others. There is no fixed endpoint to a person's competency development, with the model highlighting

instead a philosophy of life-long learning. In Melanesia at least, this model fits more closely with cultural methods for learning new skills, in which people develop competency by watching and then taking part in the same process many times.

Again, WHEEL-style indicators encourage more focus on the training process than specific titles for people on various rungs of the ladder. For example, it may prompt questions like:

- Are there opportunities for people at all levels of previous education to continue learning and developing? This includes people with only very limited formal education, through to those with higher degrees and already recognized as consultants. For the latter, WHEEL-thinking encourages communities of practice and refresher courses for maintaining and developing further competencies.
- Is appropriate supervision and evaluation taking place for all translation personnel? For the wheel to keep turning, there need to be processes in place to evaluate whether existing training has been used, what competency gaps need to be filled, and what new skills could be developed.

A challenge for this model is integration with formalized training programs, which are traditionally set up for students to take a course once and then move on to the next step. WHEEL-thinking at least suggests that program planners and training administrators should be open to participants retaking courses to refresh or develop their competencies. Those designing courses based on this conceptualization could include extension activities for those coming to the course for the second or third time, as well as opportunities for these people to take on mentoring roles to help other students as they return through the cycle.

4.4 Project planning

Over recent years, Results-Based Management (RBM) has been a popular tool for strategic planning in translation work (at least within SIL), both at the project level and the organizational level. RBM charts are typically conceptualized as a very linear (ladder-like) structure, working from inputs to outputs to outcomes, and finally impact (United Nations Development Program 2002), as in the diagram in Figure 9.

This linear depiction very helpfully models the results chain that is fundamental to the RBM model, recognizing the cause and effect relationships along the line from inputs through to impact, and giving strategic planners

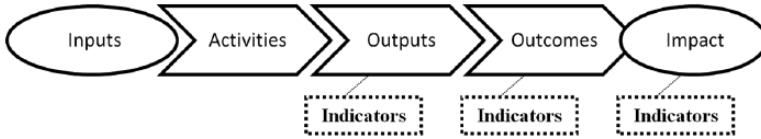

Figure 9. Linear planning process

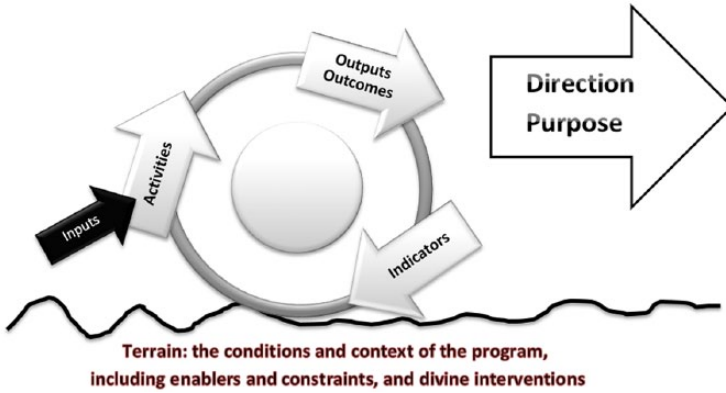

Figure 10. WHEEL-based planning process

tools to evaluate whether the inputs given are really those necessary for bringing about the desired impact, the long-term change that any project desires to bring about. LADDER-style indicators can be used at the levels of outputs and outcomes and impact to evaluate the degree of progress a project is making towards the desired impact. However, as with the other LADDER-based conceptualizations given above, this model of planning highlights a fixed endpoint to progress towards, and hides aspects of the process that need to flex and change in response to situations. The linear model also hides some of the constraints and enablers which are needed for a fuller RBM plan.

If WHEEL-thinking were used to modify this RBM model, the conceptualization may be more like Figure 10 (David Nicholls 2014, personal communication). With this model, the desired impact at the end of the ladder has been replaced with an overall direction or purpose for a translation project. Indicators are now not about the steps in progression towards the impact, but whether the wheel is moving in the desired direction. Most importantly, these indicators are now a significant part of a cycle, so that activities

and their outputs are repeatedly evaluated to refine and adapt subsequent inputs and activities to keep the wheel turning. Multiple inputs can also be modelled from different parts of an organization, all working together in a project. Further, the enablers and constraints to the project can be conceptualized here in a straightforward manner by considering the ground on which the wheel is moving, and asking whether the conditions are helping or hindering movement in the desired direction.

With this reconceptualization of the RBM model, it becomes a more dynamic process, responsive to changing situations. It encourages progressive adaptation of strategic plans, highlighting the process of ongoing evaluation of the context and responsive modification of plans, rather than laying down a rigid plan and potentially waiting several years to revise it, as can happen in LADDER-based models.

4.5 Overall conceptualization of a Bible translation movement

Sections 4.1 to 4.4 have looked at subcomponents of a Bible translation movement, covering drafting, distribution, training, and planning. This section returns to the overall picture, developing the WHEEL-based model introduced in section 3. Often, engagement in Bible translation at this macro level has been viewed through LADDER-thinking, on one side focusing on progress towards complete Bibles, or completing specific Scripture products, whilst on the other looking at how many projects need to "begin." For example, the wycliffe.org webpage entitled "Why Bible translation?" includes the line "when people finally get the Bible in their own language lives often change in amazing ways," evoking a ladder with an end (when people "get the Bible") that is necessary before transformation takes place. Statistics on the rest of the page emphasize how many Bibles have been "completed," and how many languages need translation projects to "begin."

Such LADDER-thinking highlights the existence or lack of a certain product, but hides the ongoing work of producing revisions, making translations available in alternative media, and of ongoing Scripture impact that is fundamental to a Bible translation movement. As Robinson (1998) recognizes, "the finishing of tasks in no way guarantees sustainable impacts."

What would it look like to reconceptualize the task of Bible translation with a wheel, so that it highlighted the need to support sustainable Bible translation movements, rather than getting a job done in a specified time frame? The Bible Society's vision to "circulate the Scriptures across

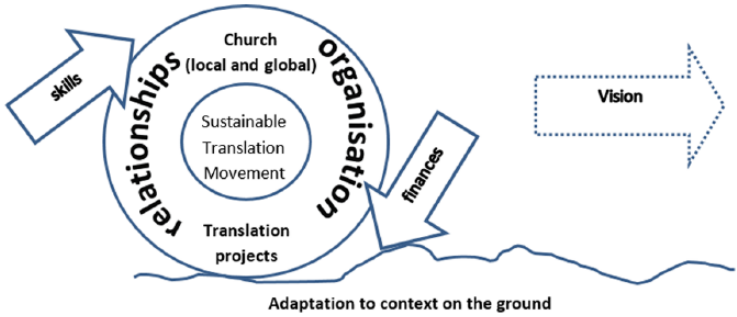

Figure 11. WHEEL-based model of a Bible translation movement

the world, in the church and through the culture just like air conditioning circulates air through a building" (2013) is one possible alternative conceptualization.

More broadly, Robinson (1998) identified five factors that affect sustainability: vision; relationships; skills; organization; and finances. The diagram in Figure 11 is an attempt to unite some of these aspects in a WHEEL-based model.

At the heart of this conceptualization is the ongoing movement between translation projects and the church (at both local and global levels), as the church supports and directs translation projects which in turn feed back into strengthening, growing, and maturing the church. The structural integrity of this wheel to ensure smooth turning depends on the degree of organization present and the relationships among those involved. The inputs, whether internal or external, that are needed to help keep the wheel turning come in the form of skills and finances. The overall direction of the turning wheel is guided by the vision of the movement, and the process of turning over the ground reflects the learning systems and adaptive strategies in the specific context.

The WHEEL-thinking inherent in this model encourages the following types of questions:

- Are there "missing spokes" in the organization which threaten the stability of the process?
- Are there buckles in relationships stopping the wheel from turning smoothly?
- Are the necessary skills and finances present to keep the wheel turning or are there funding or competency gaps?

- How can hindrances be removed from the path to help the wheel turn smoothly in this particular context?
- Is the wheel turning effectively on its own, or does it need some help to get through a rough patch? Whose hands are providing the finances and skills to turn the wheel? Are they necessary or does it have enough internal momentum?

This is one potential draft for modelling a Bible translation movement with a wheel rather than a ladder. But even this rough outline demonstrates how the wheel could help highlight questions about the process and sustainability, rather than focusing on achieving specific targets. For example, issues related to internal momentum, and whether something needs to be pushed or allowed to roll on its own, are easy to frame in this model, but not with LADDER-thinking.

5. Conclusions

In all the examples above, when we conceptualize a task through the LADDER source domain, it tends to highlight a product, and the stages required to get to that product, whether that is a completed first draft, a publishable piece of Scripture, a trained mother-tongue translator or consultant, or even a sustainable Bible translation movement. The process, the obstacles, and the ongoing movement are all hidden. On the other hand, using the WHEEL as a conceptual source domain highlights the process and encourages measurements of its movement, while hiding particular targets or endpoints. LADDER-thinking is inherently attractive to linear thinkers or people from task-oriented cultures who want to make a significant difference and get "something done." On the other hand, WHEEL-thinking may be more attractive to global thinkers or people from relationship-oriented cultures, where the process is at least as important as the product.

The specific WHEEL models presented in this paper are possible examples of how WHEEL-thinking may help reconceptualize the Bible translation task in an era of supporting sustainable movements, rather than getting the job done as quickly as possible. Hopefully they will stimulate further thoughts and models as Bible translation organizations think about what they are doing and how to communicate about it in the current context. For example, such a conceptualization may help funding agencies to evaluate how they want to be engaged in Bible translation, and whether they are just focused on helping people move from one step to the next to reach the top of the ladder, or whether they are using resources to help a wheel keep turning across different terrain. In the first case funding may be tied particularly

to completed verses, or finishing specific translation projects, whereas in the latter it might focus on church engagement activities, developing training resources, or ongoing consultant development. Similar thinking can be applied to personnel and other external resources being brought into the Bible translation movement. Again, WHEEL-thinking may help organizations recognize that spiritual transformation can happen at many points in the wheel's cycle, rather than needing a fully checked published Scripture before people can experience those blessings.

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Figure credits

Figure 1. The "Road to transformation," Wycliffe Bible Translators, Orlando, Florida, used with permission (source: https://www.wycliffe.org/transformation/).

Figure 3. WHEEL metaphor for Bible translation, Max Sahl, used with permission.

Figure 4. The "Bible life cycle," Bible Society, used with permission.

Figure 6. "Steps" to a good translation, from SIL PNG and PNG BTA, 2013, *Translators Training Course 1 Course Book*, shared under a creative commons license, CC=BY-NC-ND.

Figure 10. WHEEL-based planning process, David Nicholls, used with permission.

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