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TOWARDS AN INDIGENOUS BIBLE (IN SASL) FOR DEAF PERSONS[1]

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to give a proposal for an indigenous Bible in South African Sign Language (SASL) for Deaf persons. Due to deafness and the use of Sign Language, many Deaf people are often deprived of rights and privileges, simply because of communication problems and lack of understanding by the hearing community. SASL is a visual-gestural system with its own rules. Deaf people focus on the visual and not on the auditive form of communication. Written language can therefore be regarded as a *second* language. Proposals are made for the conceptualising of the process and product of a signed Bible in electronic format.

1. INTRODUCTION

A considerable number of people in South Africa are deaf and use SASL as their primary language to communicate. Statistics from census 2001 (Du Toit 2005) indicates that approximately 313 000 people born deaf use SASL as their primary language.

Due to their deafness and the use of sign language, many deaf people are often deprived of rights and privileges simply because of communication problems and lack of understanding by the hearing community. It is not common knowledge that Sign Language has its own lexicon and grammar, independent of any spoken language. Sign Language is a visual-gestural system with its own rules (Fromkin & Rodman 1998:20). Deaf people focus on the visual and not on the auditive form of communication (Holcomb 1994:41). Written language can therefore be regarded as a second language.

Marschark (1997:135) points out that it is important to keep in mind that reading and writing refer to performance in, for example, English, a second language for many deaf children. Evidence indicating that deaf children lag behind

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hearing peers in reading ability has been available for many years. According to Marschark (1997:135-136) it appears that more than 30% of deaf students leave school functionally illiterate. The most pronounced difficulties of deaf children compared to those of hearing children with regard to reading skills concern their vocabulary knowledge and syntactic abilities (Marschark 1997:68).

Reading is a complex process. When a word is read, processes take place to enable the reader to understand the word. In many instances words have a different meaning for deaf people than they may have for hearing people. They may even have no meaning at all because the words cannot be linked to stored data. Deaf people store data as signs (in visual format) and not as words (Marschark 1997:136-137). Take for example what happens when a deaf person sees a word CHAIR, in the following sentences:

> There are three chairs in the room.
> He chairs the meeting.

The deaf person will look at the word and visualise a chair (the thing we sit on). This, however, is not the meaning of the word CHAIR in the second sentence. This kind of problem leads to misunderstanding of the written language.

In the light of the above, it is expected that deaf people who use a sign language as a first language may have limited skills regarding reading in a second language, i.e. written language. This will definitely result in problems with the comprehension of written material. A limited vocabulary in the second language (written) may contribute to limited comprehension. This is even more so when reading more abstract material, of which the Bible is an example.

The aim of this article is to make proposals conceptualising the process and product of a signed Bible in electronic format.

2. DEAF CULTURE

2.1 Categories of people with hearing loss

In order to understand the term "deaf people", the target group in this article, the term hearing loss should be explained. It can be classified into three categories, according to the onset and degree of hearing loss. The categories include hard of hearing people, deafened people (those who became deaf after they acquired spoken language) and people born deaf (Marschark 1997:24-30).

2.2   People born deaf

Almost 90% of deaf children are born of hearing parents. For many of these deaf children, spoken language is not accessible enough to be used as a means of communication within the family. Parents have a choice between (1) use of a spoken language, (2) use of a combination of signs and the structure of a spoken language (known as "simultaneous communication" and often the outcome of a total communication (TC) approach) and (3) use of a sign language as ways of communication. Ten percent of deaf children born to deaf parents have very little or no communication problems (in the Deaf culture), because the parents use Sign Language, their first language, with their children from birth. Deaf children acquire Sign Language in the same way hearing children acquire spoken language (Marschark 1997:22, 48).

According to Van Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (1998:1), the term "deaf" can have two different meanings, namely a person with a hearing loss (pathological view), or a person belonging to a specific community (cultural view). According to the pathological view, deaf people are considered disabled and imperfect because they do not have normal hearing. People supporting this view spend time and money seeking a "cure" and they use various devices enhancing auditory perception. The pathological view has led to the historic, systematic oppression of the Deaf (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:56-60). The cultural viewpoint concerns the view that deaf people are different from the hearing community. Supporters of this view see deaf people as a socio-cultural linguistic group (a linguistic and cultural minority) with its own norms and standards (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:66-69). One of the most important factors that bind this community together is their language, namely sign language. The difference between the two viewpoints is indicated as follows: A small letter "d" is used when referring to deaf people viewed according to medical condition. If a deaf person is viewed according to the cultural view, a capital "D" is used to indicate that he/she belongs to a specific community or cultural group (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:3). The target group of this study is Deaf people seen in terms of the socio-cultural linguistic viewpoint, who form part of the Deaf community and Deaf culture in South Africa.

2.3   The Deaf and their language

According to Humphrey and Alcorn (1996:79) a community is a social system where people live together and share certain aims and responsibilities in respect of each other. The term "Deaf community" has demographic, linguistic, political and social implications (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:79). To belong to a Deaf community a person needs to socialise with deaf people, know their language, understand their frustrations and work with them. Professional people,

Sign Language interpreters, parents of deaf children, deaf people, and so forth can form part of the Deaf community (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:80).

Within the Deaf culture there is a total disassociation from speech when socialising with each other. Deaf people who are able to use speech might use it when conversing with a hearing person who is unfamiliar with Sign Language. Sign Language is first and foremost a symbol of identity. It binds people together and is used to transmit values and traditions from generation to generation. Secondly, Sign Language is used as medium of interaction. Most deaf children do not have an effective way of communication until they are exposed to Sign Language, usually when they go to school. Thirdly, Sign Language is used as a basis for cultural knowledge. Values, norms, history, and so forth are transmitted from generation to generation either in deaf families or at schools for the Deaf through the use of Sign Language (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan 1996:124-130, 148).

According to Van Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (1998:141) cultural values for Deaf people are not available in written format. There are no books children can read to learn about values and norms of the Deaf community. Children learn these sets of behaviour from older children in Deaf schools and from Deaf adults through Sign Language (Lane *et al*. 1996:126). Deaf people learn about their behaviour based on what they see and not on what they hear. The visual orientation of Deaf people is a very important substance of the Deaf community (Van Herreweghe & Vermeerbergen 1998:141).

2.4   Methods of communication used by Deaf people

Deaf people in South Africa use South African Sign Language (SASL) as method of communication. Many people are under the impression that SASL is based on the local spoken languages. This leads to the incorrect assumption that there are 11 different sign languages in South Africa. In South Africa we use SASL — a basic signed language with lexical variation (Watermeyer *et al*. 2006:194). This is also the reason why interpreters can interpret at meetings, conferences, TV news, etc. for the audience. There are not Sign Language interpreters for each spoken language. Due to a lack of understanding deaf people and their language, alternative methods of communication such as Oralism and Total Communication (TC) were developed by hearing people. These methods were developed because people believed that a Sign Language could not be a fully-fledged language and because hearing people were not able to use Sign Language. Lane *et al*. (1996:36) explain that Oralism refers to deaf people who are taught to use spoken language as a way of communication with others. Total Communication has developed into a system where signs are taken and used with the English word order, parallel to spoken language. When there are no signs for certain words,

signs are invented by the hearing person. This method often means that many deaf people do not learn Sign Language properly and therefore have difficulty in learning a second language (written format) (Marschark 1997:50).

Sign Language is a visual-gestural system with its own rules and regulations where hand and body movements form signs that represent concepts. It is a language independent from any spoken language and has its own structure. Not only does Sign Language consists of purposeful hand and arm movements, but the whole face and upper body are used in the formation of signs (Fromkin & Rodman 1998:20).

Fromkin and Rodman (1998:81) describe a sign as a single gesture (possibly with a complex meaning) in sign languages used by the Deaf that is equivalent to the term "word" in spoken language. Finger-spelling is the use of separate hand shapes/hand forms to represent the letters of the alphabet of a spoken language. Finger-spelling is used when you convey names or concepts where no signs exist (Baker-Shenk & Cokely 1980:19). As Sign Language is a visual language, it does not have a written equivalent. Deaf people focus on the visual and not on the auditory component of communication. Therefore their behaviour and thoughts are centred on vision (Holcomb 1994:57).

Prinsloo (2003:6, 17) indicates that except for the difference in modality, sign languages resembles spoken language in every other way. Sign Language is not just an elaborate form of miming or a finger-spelled version of spoken language, but a rule-governed system of arbitrary symbols. Sign Language is also not inferior to any spoken languages. It has the same intellectual, expressive and social functions as spoken language. Gestures are precise, regular, rule-governed body movements that form the words and intonation of the language. Non-manual signals form an important part of the grammar of Sign Language and (normally does) modify meaning. Similar to spoken languages, sign languages also has dialects.

In producing a sign, the parameters for producing a sign must be kept in mind. According to Prinsloo (2003:18), these parameters can be compared with phonemes in spoken languages. These parameters are the hand shape (the form your hand takes when you make a sign); palm orientation (the way your palm faces when you produce a sign); movement (some signs have a specific movement, others are static); location (where in the signing space the sign is produced); and non-manual markers (facial expression and body movement that represents the grammar of Sign Language or as part of the production of the sign). There is a difference between non-manual activity as part of an individual sign (i.e. as a parameter of the sign) and non-manual activity as part of the grammar. These are two different levels that should not be confused.

As in any field of study, certain myths and assumptions regarding sign languages have developed over the years. One is that sign languages are universal and can be used as a lingua franca of the world. The fact is that every country has its own signed language, for example American Sign Language (ASL), Japanese Sign Language (JSL) and British Sign Language (BSL). In South Africa, the Deaf community uses SASL, which is independent from any other signed language. Dialects exist in all sign languages used in the world.

According to Humphrey and Alcorn (1996:40) another myth is that sign languages consist of iconic and random signs made in the air. If this was the case, everybody would be able to understand sign languages. There are specific rules governing the production of a sign. Some signs might appear iconic if produced on their own, e.g. the sign for HOUSE imitates the roof and walls of a house, but the moment these signs are made within a sentence, they may no longer appear iconic (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:39-50).

Another myth is that sign languages are ungrammatical. For people who do not know a sign language, a word for word translation of a signed sentence certainly may seem ungrammatical, e.g.: "I HOME GO" is a signed sentence translated directly from SASL into English. This sentence is ungrammatical in English, but if one translates directly from English to Afrikaans, "I am going home" to "Ek gaan huis", the English will also be ungrammatical to an Afrikaans-speaking person (Humphrey & Alcorn 1996:48).

All the aspects mentioned above indicate that SASL is a human language equivalent to any spoken language.

2.5   Deaf people and the written/printed Bible

In comparison with hearing children, deaf children of hearing parents have a backlog with regards to language development, because they do not have the same access to language acquisition as hearing children of hearing parents. The reason for this is that most hearing parents usually do not know Sign Language. This backlog increases during the school years as children are exposed to Oralism and Total Communication (Marschark 1997:12, 88, 89). According to Gallaudet University, a large number of their students do not have the skills to use text books successfully on first year level. These students, some 30%, are functionally illiterate in terms of the basic reading and writing skills needed for one to function in the community. Marschark (1997:135) indicates that it is important to keep in mind that reading and writing refer to performance in, for example, English, which is a second language for many deaf children. Evidence indicating that deaf children lag behind hearing peers in reading ability has been available for many years. The most pronounced difficulties of deaf children,

with regard to reading skills, concern their vocabulary knowledge and syntactic abilities (Marschark, 1997:68).

Steps have been taken to make the Bible more accessible for the Deaf. A complete Bible for the Deaf, written in English, has been produced in the United States. The whole Bible, *Die Bybel vir Dowes* (2007), is available in written Afrikaans for the Afrikaans deaf community in a deaf friendly version. This includes simpler words, drawings and footnotes 'explaining' specific terminology.

3. EMPERICAL STUDY REGARDING A PRINTED BIBLE FOR DEAF PEOPLE

A study was done within the South African Deaf community regarding the accessibility of written Biblical texts versus signed Biblical texts. Seventy seven respondents were selected randomly among deaf people who use SASL as their first language. Individual, as well as group interviews were held and these interviews were done according to a questionnaire. Interviews were conducted in SASL and were video-recorded, whereafter the researcher completed the questionnaires.

Research regarding comprehension of the written Bible texts against the Sign Language Bible texts was done in two groups. Both Afrikaans and English written Bibles were used as the respondents consisted of Deaf people with Afrikaans as second language or English as second language. Group one was exposed to two extracts from the written Bible (Daniel 7 and Mark 14:22-26). One text was taken from the *Die Bybel vir Dowes* (Daniel 7) and the other text (Mark 14:22-26) from a written Bible — *The Holy Bible*. Group one was also exposed to three extracts from the signed texts, namely Psalm 23, Matthew 7:24-28 and Luke 11:1-4. Understanding of the texts was tested by means of a set of five questions about the texts. All respondents had the opportunity to read and look at the text only once. Questions were asked and answered in SASL. Group two was exposed to three written texts, Psalm 23 taken from *The Holy Bible*, Matthew 7:24-28 from the *Bible for the Deaf* (UK version — English version) and Luke 11:1-4 taken from the *Bible for the Deaf* (UK version — English version). This group also looked at the signed texts, Mark 14:22-26 and Daniel 7. The same questions were asked of both groups about each text. Exodus 20 was not used as part of the research regarding the comprehension of the text. All respondents were given the opportunity to look at Exodus 20 to evaluate aspects of what they would like to see on the video, such as the background, and so on.

3.1   Profile of respondents

A total of 77 respondents were randomly selected from Kwazulu-Natal, Western Cape, Gauteng, Free State and Northern Cape. 21% of the respondents were from Kwazulu-Natal, 17% of the Free State, 13% from Gauteng and 4% from the Northern Cape. Of the 77 respondents, 32 (42%) were male and 45 (58%) female. All age groups, except children under the age of 16, were included in this research. The largest percentage of respondents fell in the young adulthood group, aged between 18 and 40 years. As the respondents were randomly selected, the assumption may be made that the deaf people in this age group are more involved in community activities provided by organisations and churches for the Deaf, like DEAFSA, Natal Association for the Deaf and The Bastion. As it was a randomly selected group of respondents, the researcher did not have control over the education level of the participants. Although the majority of respondents indicated that they had a high school level of education, the actual grade was not specified. Level of education affects not only one's ability to read English/Afrikaans, but also has an influence on the signing skills of the respondents. It was found that the Deaf people with a lower level of education did not actively take part in the provincial and national activities of the Deaf. Their signing is limited to the regional dialect, because of the lack of exposure to Deaf people from other provinces.

Due to literacy problems, only 73% of the total number of respondents was used in the research regarding the accessibility of the written Bible.

3.2   Perceptions of the Bible

A large percentage of both groups indicated that their knowledge of the Bible was average (48%) and 43% of the respondents indicated that their knowledge of the Bible was only "here and there". Compared to the race distribution and literacy levels of the respondents, the assumption can be made that 46% of the respondents were from the white community with access to churches, Bible study groups, as well as religious education at school. "Here and there" knowledge refers to parts of the Bible that are regularly read and talked about. This would include Exodus 20, Psalm 23, Mark 14:22-26, Matthew 7:24-28 and Luke 11:1-4, which were four of the five extracts used in the study.

3.3 Choice between the *Bible for the Deaf* or another written version

An overall conclusion that Deaf people prefer the *Bible for the Deaf* above the written version in English/Afrikaans cannot be drawn. The choice of which version they preferred was influenced by the choice of text, and whether it was known or less known.

All of the deaf people involved in the study, indicated that there should be pictures in the written *Bible for the Deaf* although it should not be similar to a children's Bible. Pictures were only to be used to illustrate difficult concepts. All the respondents (100%) felt that there ought to be explanations for difficult terms in the *Bible for the deaf*. 48% of the respondents indicated that the explanations should be written underneath the texts (similar to footnotes), while 52% felt that the explanation should be written next to the word.

86% of the respondents felt that a written *Bible for the Deaf* should be written in simpler Afrikaans or English, while 14% felt that this was not necessary.

66% of the respondents felt that there ought to be a separate Bible written *Bible for the Deaf*, while 34% felt that a separate Bible was not needed.

3.4 Accessibility of the written text vs the signed text

In this section of the questionnaire, respondents were exposed to both written and signed texts. Their comprehension of the two texts was tested by a set of questions about the texts. Five questions were asked about each text. The respondents' answers were either right or wrong. The questions were asked and answered in SASL. The process was video-recorded. The videos were used by the researcher to complete the questionnaires. Respondents had only one chance to read or look at the text. This might have had an influence on the outcome of the study. If a text is read more than once, a person will have a better understanding of the content and questions might be answered more easily. The literacy level of respondents also played a role in the results.

3.4.1 Written texts

If all the questions asked to the respondents about the written texts are considered, the following was reflected: Respondents answered more questions correctly about Matthew and Luke. More wrong answers were given about Daniel, Psalm 23 and the text in Mark 14. An assumption can be made that Matthew 7 and Luke 11 are better known to the respondents than the other texts.

3.4.2 Signed texts

The same questions were asked about the signed texts. Except for Daniel 7 and Psalm 23, more answers were correct. An assumption can be made that Daniel 7 is not a well-known section.

With regards to the accessibility of the written text versus the signed texts, fewer correct answers were given about the questions asked of the written texts, while more correct answers were given about the signed texts. 57% correct answers were given with regards to the signed text, in comparison to the 42% correct answers for the written texts.

Factors which might have had an influence on the outcome of the research regarding the accessibility of the written texts versus the visual texts were the time allowed to read and look at the texts (they could only look at it once), the fact that the researcher was unknown, literacy levels (deaf people with good reading skills are usually those who have been exposed to literature that has developed their reading skills), exposure to the national deaf community (these people are used to regional sign language dialects) and the situation which was strange due to the presence of a video camera, questionnaires, a TV and video machine.

After the translation of the excerpts and the production of the video, it was evaluated by 77 respondents from the Deaf community. 96% of the respondents indicated that they preferred a signed Bible, because they could understand it more easily. 80% of the 96% indicated that they would like to use a signed Bible together with a written Bible to address their needs.

With this information in hand, a conclusion can be made that a serious need for a Bible in SASL exists in the Deaf community of South Africa. Some congregations use signed Bibles from other countries, but these are not effective due to the differences in sign languages. In the study it was also indicated that a signed text was found to be more accessible than the written version of the same text.

4. TOWARDS A BIBLE IN SASL

A Bible in SASL refers to a Bible in Sign Language, available on CD or DVD. Although there is no SASL Bible available in South Africa, sign language Bibles are available in a few countries around the world. Examples of countries that have Sign Language Bibles or parts of the Bible available are America, Japan, Australia and Britain. To develop a process for the translation of written Biblical texts into SASL, the translation processes used in Japan and America are discussed shortly.

4.1   The Japanese Sign Language Bible

The Japan Deaf Evangelic Mission followed the following translation process in the translation of the JSL Bible (Japan Deaf Evangel Mission s.a.):

- During the first preliminary translation, a Deaf translator reads the Japanese text and translates it into JSL. This translation is video-recorded.
- Check the sign language to be used in the translation to ensure that all the signs used in the translation have meaning for the Japanese deaf people.
- Check the source text of the preliminary translation on the basis of the original Hebrew or Greek.
- During the second preliminary translation, a translation is done with all the abovementioned changes kept in mind.
- During the viewers' evaluation, a third party scrutinises the video and answers content questions. Changes are made until the viewers' perception and the true meaning of the message are equivalent.
- The abovementioned steps are repeated until the final translation is completed.
- The participants practice the parts the day before recording.
- Recording in a studio.
- In the editing phase, chapters and verses are added with subtitles for finger-spelled words, as well as technical terminology.
- Finally, the quality of the recording, as well as the accuracy of the subtitles is checked and evaluated.
- Publishing.

4.2   The American Sign Language Bible

During 1981 the Deaf Mission started an Omega Project to make the Bible more accessible for the Deaf. The first videos were made of Matthew, Luke, Acts and Philippians. The sign language used was strongly influenced by English (Pidgin Signed English). Soon after that American Sign Language translators and mother tongue consultants translated the Bible into a visual format where American Sign Language (ASL) was used. Today more than 25% of the Bible is available in ASL.

The written Bible sometimes has additional information to assist with understanding. This may include maps, definitions and explanations. This is also included in the ASL Bible. Maps are used on the screen and notes in ASL provide cultural information, as well as terminology. The American translation in sign language is translated from the Hebrew and Greek source texts and is independent

from any other English translation. A major lack of these translations is that the Hebrew and Greek linguist do not have full access to Sign Language to enable them to check if the Sign Language translation is accurate regarding the accents and vocabulary used. Interpreters or bilingual coordinators must be used to provide access to translated text. The following aspects were very important in the production of the translation: the sharpness of the image, colourfulness, close-up shots of the signers, on-screen references to chapters and verses which assisted with the location of specific parts of the Bible, graphics, notes, maps and illustrations. An English voice is included on the video (Deafmission s.a.).

The translators of the Bible into ASL followed a team approach, the same as in Japan. A team was compiled with three or more people for each book of the Bible. Each team has two or more deaf members for whom ASL is their first language. A deaf person is used in front of the camera as signer of the whole translation. The other Deaf people act as consultants, assisting in ensuring that the translation is accurate. Each team has a hearing member which acts as a bilingual coordinator. This person is conversant in both ASL and English. The other member of the team is a source text specialist (Hebrew or Greek). This person works with the team to ensure that the original meaning is translated into ASL.

During the translation process, the team members read the extracts in an English translation and discuss the meaning of each section. They study other written notes as compiled by the source language consultant. Afterwards the team works on a translation of each text. The bilingual coordinator discusses questions regarding the translation with the source language consultant. When the notes are complete, the translation is refined. The ASL signer memorises the translated parts and a trial video is recorded. When the team is satisfied with the translation, it is given to the source text consultant who looks at accuracy regarding the original Hebrew and Greek. If needed, the bilingual coordinator acts as interpreter. Recommendations are made if there are parts that are not clear. Changes and adaptations are made, the signer memorises it and it is recorded again.

The next step is to invite the local Deaf community to look at the trial video. Questions are asked of the translation team, opinions are given and proposals are discussed. The team takes notes and these are used to rework the texts and to change them. The final video is recorded, edited, copied and distributed. The process is very long and many people are involved, all with the sole aim of ensuring that the translation is accurate and easily understood by the Deaf community (Noe 2003).

4.3   Production of a Bible in SASL

4.3.1 Challenges when translating from a written to a visual language

According to Brislin (1976:38), as Sign Language is a human language, there is no reason for the translation process to be radically different from the process of translating into a spoken language. There are, however, unique characteristics that must be taken into consideration in the process of translating. In Sign Language transcriptions, not all the linguistic information can be included or represented. Information on the use of space, for example, cannot be included in the transcription.

A further challenge is the fact that more than one word or part of a sentence or concepts can be included in a single sign. In many cases one sign represents concepts and it might happen that the signed version is clearer than the written version. An example is the following: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." In SASL the HE is replaced with the sign of the person to whom it refers, in other words GOD. The HE in SASL is therefore more easily understandable than in the written version where an uncertainty might occur as to whom the HE refers to (Hitchcock & Benofy 1997:97).

The use of the signing space (the area in front of the signer in which the sign is produced) can create challenges in the translation of sign language. When signing, objects and individuals are placed in the signing space in specific positions related to one another. If there is a reference to a specific object or person, the signer *points* to that object or person. This has the result that finger-spelling becomes limited. Personal pronouns in sign languages usually take the form of pointing signs. This has been abundantly described for most, if not all, of the sign languages studied so far. This means that it is incorrect to say like Hitchcock and Benofy (1997) that a signer pointing at objects or people (or loci for non-present objects and people) results in the absence of pronouns, quite the contrary.

In the translation process, the use of role shifting can also provide a challenge. It might appear that information is added because of the constant "moving" of the body in the signing space. Vermeerbergen (1997:25) explains that the term role shifting is used for referring to how the signer takes up the roles of the different people indicated in a story, for instance. The signer uses the signing space to "become" the person who is speaking. If another person begins to speak, the signer takes up the role of that person by moving to a different position. This can be described as direct speech in spoken language (Vermeerbergen 1997). Role shifting is a tool that is used by the signer to

prevent having to sign something like "Jesus said". The signer actually takes up the role of Jesus (Vermeerbergen 1997).

According to Brislin (1976:54) there are other challenges experienced in the translation of a sign language. There is a lack of dictionaries in SASL to assist Bible translation into SASL.

4.3.2 Translating into a sign language

Brislin (1976:88) indicates that a specific tool is used in the translation process from and into sign languages. This tool is the so-called *back translation*, where two bilingual translators are used. The one translator prepares a target text from the source text. The second translator translates the target text back to the source text. The two translations are compared and differences are taken into consideration in the preparation of a new target text translation. This process is repeated until the texts are equivalent (Brislin 1976:88-91).

Regarding the principles of translation, the best available texts must be used for the translation. These texts are usually in the original source language, namely Hebrew and Greek. If needed, additional material can be used for reading purposes and must be indicated as footnotes (Japan Deaf Evangel Mission s.a.).

Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration when using Sign Language is that the more generally accepted signs must be used rather than regional dialects. The intellectual level of the signs must be on the same intellectual level as that of the target group. This is determined by the deaf people involved in the process.

The translation team must consist of mother tongue speakers. Access to technology is important. This includes electronic translations of the Bible, video cameras, TV's and video equipment (Japan Deaf Evangel Mission s.a.).

To translate and produce a Bible for the Deaf in Sign Language, processes need to be followed to ensure an accurate Sign Language translation that is accessible for the target group. The process used to translate from a written text to a SASL text will be explained in the next section.

4.3.3 The translation process towards a Bible in SASL

The translation process to be used in producing the SASL Bible text shows similarities to the method used in America when the Bible was translated into ASL.

Step 1: Selection of texts or books to be translated

As no SASL Bible exists, Biblical extracts for translation into SASL have to be selected. This can be done in a similar way as the empirical study, by sending questionnaires to schools and congregations for the Deaf. The questionnaires include questions such as which part of the Bible do you like to read; which parts are easily understood; which parts are not easily understood and which parts you would like to have translated into SASL.

The feedback will give the translation team guidance in the selection process. Different genres of texts should be taken into consideration in the selection process, e.g. The Lord's Prayer and a parable. Selections can also be made where a more formal discourse is used, for example Exodus 20. Another criterion for selection is the inclusion of more abstract pieces, such as Psalm 23.

In the empirical study, the following samples were selected for translation, namely Exodus 20:1-17 (the Ten Commandments), Psalm 23 (The Lord is my Shepherd), Daniel 7:1-7 (Daniel's dream about four animals), Matthew 7:24-28 (A wise person and a foolish person), Mark 14:22-26 (The Lord's Supper) and Luke 11:1-4 (How we must pray).

Step 2: Setting up a translation team

The Deaf members of the translation team should be selected from the provinces where larger concentrations of deaf people are found. This includes Gauteng, Western Cape, Central and Eastern Free State and the Northern Cape. Race, sex, age and level of competency in SASL are aspects that need to be taken into consideration in the selection process. Level of education is not one of the most important factors in the selection process. Rather give attention to the profile of persons in the Deaf community, their involvement in the national Deaf community, as well as their competence in SASL. Exposure to different SASL dialects is important as choosing the most suitable sign in the translation is crucial. For the empirical study, five Deaf people formed part of the translation team.

It is also important to include a bilingual coordinator, who is a trained Sign Language interpreter, specialists in the field of translation and Biblical specialists who could assist with the back translations by comparing the translations with the source languages, Hebrew and Greek.

Step 3: Translating the texts

It is proposed that the selected team gather at a central venue for an initial period of time for the translation of the extracts, as well as for the recording of the trial video. During the translation process for the empirical study, the team gathered for a period of five days in Bloemfontein.

On day one the process of translation can be discussed with the deaf members of the team. The emphasis should be on the most important aspects that should to be taken into consideration when the actual translation is done. This orientation should be done by the translation experts in collaboration with the bilingual coordinator, acting as interpreter.

After the process of translation is discussed, the selected sections of the Bible to be translated can be given to the team. During the empirical study the team decided to start the translation process with The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-4), as all the deaf team members were familiar with this extract.

The first step in the translation process is to discuss the meaning of the text. Words that are more difficult to sign should be identified and discussed. The different signs used in the different provinces should be discussed for the team to decide on one sign that would be used on the video. Words/signs that might be confusing or not so well-known should be identified to be put into a glossary at the beginning of the video.

The text can then be translated from English to SASL, verse by verse. English texts from *The Holy Bible Easy-to-read version*, 21st *King James Version*, *Amplified Bible* and the *Good News Bible* (TEV) can be used for the translation.

After completion of the entire text, the team should choose one person to sign it on video. The text in SASL is transcribed onto a flipchart and then practised by the signer with the assistance of the other team members. This trial translation is video recorded and then given to the source language experts, who have to compare it with the original Hebrew and Greek. The comparison was done by source language experts. This is done through the process of writing down the signed version using Afrikaans[2] words (transcription). It is then translated into Afrikaans as it would have been interpreted (the transcribed version with the interpreted version is indicated below). This is done by the bilingual coordinator. The same procedure is followed for each of the selected parts.

In the empirical study, the translation of Daniel 7 proved to be the most difficult due to the fact that it is very abstract. The deaf people found it difficult to visualise the beasts. Additional visual information from the internet was used to assist.

Here is an example, Luke 11:1-4, of a transcribed text as it was used for the first video recording during the empirical study (Capital letters are always used when "writing down" a sign language):

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2   Afrikaans was chosen during the transcription process as it is the mother tongue of the bilingual coordinator and the source language experts.

Transcribed version of Luke 11:1-4 (The Lord's Prayer) into Afrikaans

TYD JESUS GAAN BID (kniel) KLAAR DISSIPEL EEN (aandag getrek) JESUS (kyk na die dissipel) U ASSEBLIEF LEER BID HOE DIESELFDE VERLEDE J-O-H-A-N-N-E-S HY LEER HULLE DIESELFDE LEER MY (Jesus kyk na dissipel) JY BID HOE VADER HEMEL NAAM U WONDERLIK HEILIG KONINGKRYK U KOM (van bo in die hemel na die aarde)

TYD AANGAAN KOS GEE GEE SONDE VERGEWE MYNE DIESELFDE EK VERGEWE HULLE TE NA KOM MY VERSOEKING(S) EK VERKEERD DOEN NEE

Luke 11:1-4 as it was interpreted by the bilingual interpreter into Afrikaans

Jesus het gaan bid en toe hy klaar was het 'n dissipel na hom toe gekom. Jesus het na die dissipel gekyk. Die dissipel het vir Jesus gevra "Asseblief leer ons bid soos wat Johannes sy dissipels geleer het. Leer ons ook."

Jesus het na die dissipel gekyk en gesê: "Wanneer jy bid sê, Vader in die Hemel, U naam is wonderbaar en heilig. U koningkryk moet kom. Gee ons altyd kos. Vergewe my sondes soos ek die wat teen my kwaad doen, vergewe. Moenie my versoek sodat ek verkeerd kan doen nie."

It is important to receive feedback from the source text experts. In the empirical study, problems were experienced with aspects such as direct and indirect speech, first person and third person.

The feedback will indicate whether any information was left out or misunderstood. Texts should then be reworked and practised again for the recording of the trial video.

Step 4: Production of a trial video

The next step in the process is to edit the trial video. The trial video should include a glossary at the beginning of the tape, with specific words/signs.

The trial video is edited by the bilingual coordinator with the assistance of the deaf team members. After the editing had been completed, the video can be duplicated and given to the deaf team members together with a questionnaire containing questions about the video. The team members will show the video to deaf people from their communities whereafter the questionnaires on the video can be completed. The questionnaire is then sent back to the bilingual coordinator.

The questionnaire about the trial video will include aspects like the signs that were used, sentence structure, clarity of the extracts that were signed, understanding of the contents and the skills of the signer.

Step 5: Evaluation of the trial video

The evaluation of the trial video will show which aspects need to be addressed before the final video is shot and produced.

During the empirical study, deaf people indicated that some of the signs were unclear or confusing or not part of the dialect used by the specific person. Most of these signs were included in the glossary. The following signs were mentioned: WINE, COVENANT, KINGDOM, NEW, FATHER, TEMPTATION, FORGIVE, YOUR KINGDOM COME, BREAD, HEAVEN, DISCIPLE, ADUL-TERY, WORSHIP, COMMANDMENT, PARENTS, IDOL, RESPECT, SEA, RE-MEMBER, DESIRE, BABYLON, TO RULE, TEETH, HORN, ROCK, VALLEY, PREPARE and SHEPHERD.

The respondents of the empirical study indicated that they are satisfied with the structure of the SASL used in all of the signed texts except for Exodus 20 where the structure was indicated as somewhat influenced by English. As a result of the signing speed of the signer, some parts were unclear, because they were too fast. It was also indicated that some parts were not signed fluently. Comments were received regarding the facial expressions of the signer that were not visible enough because the signer's hands were too high in the signing space.

Step 6: Preparation of texts

With the comments from the Deaf community in mind, the bilingual coordinator needs to rework the texts in preparation for the next step. The texts should be transcribed into SASL and sent to all the Deaf team members for comments and preparation for the final translations and video recording.

Step 7: Final translation and video recording

The final changes and adaptations to the text could be done when members of the team gather once again. After the alterations are made, the texts should be scrutinised by source text experts. The texts can then be written on a flipchart in SASL, using English words. The signers memorise the parts and this is video-recorded by a professional recording team. The video is edited and different backgrounds, maps, pictures, etc., should be added to the final product.

The production of the video should include the following visual aspects, as was retrieved from the empirical study.

• There must be a glossary at the beginning of each chapter. The words must be placed at the bottom of the screen. It was proposed that the background colour should be light blue.

• When the name of the extract appears on the screen, a one-colour background is preferred.

- The text and verse should be indicated in the right-hand corner of the screen.
- For the background of the signed text, one photo is preferred for each extract. Photos are preferred to pictures. The photo should not alternate while the signer is busy signing. It was emphasised that the pictures could contribute to the understanding of the extract. The photos could be explanatory in themselves. Pictures could be used to assist with the explanation of terminology or abstract aspects, for example the beasts in Daniel 7.
- Maps can be included where needed.
- As indicated by the respondents there must be no sound or subtitles on the video. A glossary at the beginning of the video will deal with signs that might be unfamiliar to some members of the target audience.
- Subtitles may cause problems because the question arises as to which language should be used. If it is Afrikaans, a large part of the community is excluded. If it is in English, the Afrikaans Deaf community will feel excluded.
- Christian signers from each province should be selected to sign on the video. Different signers for each text are preferred. (If the entire Bible is signed, there would have to be a different signer for each Book.)

The following is an example of a transcribed text used in the production of the final video during the empirical study. Different acronyms and symbols are used to indicate eye gaze, placement, repetition, negation, etc. in the written format.

Exodus 20

1. GOD SAY
2. I GOD YOURS PAST YOU EGYPT SLAVE I MAKE-FREE NOW YOU
    COMMANDMENTS
    MINE DO MUST //
3. COMMANDMENTS MINE:
           _rep   neg   eye gaze
    1) YOU IDOL DIFFERENT WORSHIP NO ME WORSHIP
           _rep   neg
4. **2)** YOU IDOL MAKE NO THEY SAME SOMETHING HEAVEN MAKE EARTH
                    neg
    MAKE WATER-IN MAKE NO
                              rep
    WHY I GOD YOURS I PEOPLE IDOL WORSHIP HATE
5. THEY GENERATION 3 4 I PUNISH
                                          ___rep
6. BUT PEOPLE COMMANDS MINE DO SAME LOVE I FAMILY ONGOING
    CARE
                          neg
7. **3)** YOU NAME GOD WRONG USE NO YOU WRONG USE GOD PUNISH

8. **4)** REST DAY REMEMBER MUST WHY DAY SPECIAL
        _rep   ___rep
9. YOU DAY SIX WORK
10. BUT DAY SEVEN REST // GOD WORSHIP// REST DAY WORK
                                              neg
    NOTHING YOU SON DAUGHTER SLAVES WORK NO
                                    neg
    SAME ANIMALS PEOPLE COME WORK NO
11. WHY GOD HEAVEN MAKE EARTH MAKE (pt, pt) WATER MAKE (pt, pt)
    BUT DAY SEVEN GOD REST // REST DAY BLESS
12. **5)** FATHER MOTHER YOURS YOU RESPECT MUST WHY LIFE YOURS
    LONG
        ____rep   neg
13. **6)** YOU MURDER NO
        _____rep   neg
14. **7)** YOU ADULTERY NO
            neg
15. **8)** YOU STEEL NO
        ____rep   neg
16. **9)** OTHER PERSON YOU LIE NO
                            neg
17. **10) YOU** OTHER PERSON HOUSE WANT NO
                                neg
    SAME WIFE SERVANT COW DONKEY ANYTHING WANT NO

5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

As there is no SASL Bible available in South Africa, it is recommended that a project be started as soon as possible to translate the written Bible into SASL, according to the process proposed.

It is recommended that a steering committee for the project be formed, with representation of DEAFSA, together with the Bible Association of SA, to oversee the process.

It is further recommended that deaf people from all provinces be selected and trained as translators of the Bible. A translation team must be compiled, which will include deaf translators and specialists in the field of religion as well as a bilingual coordinator who can act as an interpreter within the team.

Signers must be identified from the different provinces. They must feel comfortable with their lines as well as with the camera. They must be able to sign with confidence and conviction. The signers must be natural and spontaneous,

and should be trained in the skill of signing in front of a camera. It is important that they work hand in hand with the team of translators.

It is recommended that a professional Deaf team be identified for the recording of the translated parts. Existing production teams must be considered for the actual recording of the translated parts. These teams include the team from Dtv (a South African television program with Deaf people as target audience) or the team situated at the De la Bat School for the Deaf at Worcester responsible for producing videos with Deaf people as target audience. The translation process as indicated in this article must be followed as it will ensure that the translation is accurate. Deaf people should be trained and used as translators together with a team of Bible experts to assist with the translation from the source language.

This study indicates that religious information in written format is, generally, inaccessible to the deaf community of South Africa. To address this problem, a Bible in SASL is needed. Translation, however, is a very specialised process and skilled people are needed to coordinate the process. As Sign Language is the first language of deaf born people, it is of the utmost importance that they form part of the translation team as well as the production team of such a video.

A Bible in SASL will ensure that the scriptures are made accessible to a minority group that has been deprived of rights for so many years.

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