

Laying the foundations for Bible translation



*Unlocking the secrets
of an unwritten
language.*

You could be a linguistics specialist

Many of the 2,500 or more languages where translation is still needed do not yet have a written form, and the majority have never been analysed or documented. These are vital parts of the translation process. If the grammar of the language is not understood the translation will be difficult to understand or even

wrong, and if the language is not written down in a systematic way the translation will be hard to read. The goal of a linguist in Wycliffe is to study the sounds and grammar of a language to prepare the way for Bible translation, literacy and Scripture Use.

What does a linguist do?

The first stage in analysing a language is to transcribe words, sentences and stories using the international phonetic alphabet.

Many languages have sounds that do not exist in English or other European languages, and in many parts of the world the languages are tonal, where the pitch affects the meaning of the words.

Working with members of the language community, the linguist analyses the sounds used and helps produce a writing system.

Other tasks include preparing a dictionary, studying the grammar and analysing the structures of the language and how they are used.

When this has been accomplished the linguistic team should have

done enough work to enable translation and literacy to begin in the language.

"Many of the people had been told that they were "not people" because they had no alphabet. But after they had been given alphabets plus dictionaries plus books in their own languages, they would sometimes say, "Now we are people!"

Kenneth Pike



Laying the foundations for Bible translation



Qualifications

You would normally already have a degree or similar level qualification. You would be a committed Christian and part of an active Christian fellowship. You would be open to working with Wycliffe for 2 years or more.

Training

Training is offered through the European Training Programme.

First you will gain a broad understanding of what language work is and will study language learning and cultural adaptation through the *Language and Culture Acquisition* course.

Then you will be trained for your initial role by following specialist training in language study skills or dictionary making.

Many linguists take further training at a later date, following advanced courses at ETP or postgraduate studies at a university.

For further information about the European Training Programme go to www.eurotp.org/uk

The opportunities

Often linguistic work takes place in the area where the language is spoken and involves learning the language and being part of the community.

You may also be part of a regional team, running training courses and workshops for people from several language groups. This is a key strategy for reaching many language communities over a wide area.

You may also spend time meeting local language committees, talking them through the stages of the project, discussing ideas for the writing system and listening to their plans for their language.

Most linguists move on to become Bible translators for the language they have been working on.

Others may continue as full-time linguists, working as mentors and consultants for other linguists, and leading workshops and training courses.

What skills would you need?

A background in linguistics or languages can be helpful, but is not essential, since we provide training. We have often found that those with a background in an analytical subject such as mathematics or science can become excellent linguists. An eye for detail or a musical ear can also be very helpful.

All linguists will need a good grounding in the tools of language analysis, beginning with phonetics, phonology and syntax. You will need to be able to learn a new language and work well in a cross-cultural team. You will need to be adaptable, and able to persevere whatever your circumstances.

Contact us on 01494 682256 or at recruitment_uk@wycliffe.org

Or complete the enquiry form at www.wycliffe.org.uk/linguistics.

Finance

Costs vary depending on where in the world you are working. We will help you draw up a budget for your particular situation.

Wycliffe positions are not salaried. Wycliffe personnel trust God to meet their needs through a team of prayer and financial partners: mission is done in partnership with the local sending church, and in reliance on God who says he

will provide all our needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4.19).



wycliffe.org.uk