

**Abilene Christian University**

**Graduate School**

**Doctor of Ministry Thesis Sample Pages**

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## ABSTRACT

This doctor of ministry thesis presents the findings of a project in which I led a group of immigrants from South Sudan through the process of generating and evaluating an oral draft of Luke 8:4-15 in Uduk. The aim of this project was to provide a substantive field test of an oral translation methodology conducted among immigrants living in the United States who speak a language that lacks a translation of the entire Bible. The project involved facilitating basic translation training and conducting an oral drafting process with a team of three Uduk speakers. This project also involved evaluating the draft from three angles: an exegetical analysis of the draft, a comprehension check with a group of three Uduk speakers who were not part of the translation team, and an interview with a Bible translation expert regarding the quality of the draft. The project occurred in a series of sessions that took place in September and October 2014.

Several key findings emerged from the study. The results affirmed the viability of the use of an oral translation methodology conducted among immigrants by succeeding in creating a natural, clear, and accurate draft of Luke 8:4-15 in Uduk. The project also upheld that this translation process can be utilized effectively in full-scale translation projects. More specifically, this project has established the opportunity to conduct future translation work for portions of the OT that have not yet been translated into Uduk. While this project entailed a condensed simulation of what would transpire in an actual translation project, the overall findings of the project offer a positive evaluation of both the oral draft and the methodology used to produce it.

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Evaluating an Oral Draft of Luke 8:4-15 in Uduk

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Theology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

By

Jeremy N. Harrison

May 2015

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(Optional dedication) To my family/friends/spouse, who do great things/are great people

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS      Optional

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## CHAPTER I

### AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

This project addressed the need at Pioneer Bible Translators<sup>1</sup> to explore an oral translation approach among immigrants in the United States. The aim of this project was to provide a substantive field test of an oral translation methodology among immigrants who speak a language that does not yet have a translation of the entire Bible. This was accomplished by producing and evaluating an oral draft<sup>2</sup> of Luke 8:4-15 in Uduk with South Sudanese immigrants living in the Dallas area.

The first chapter of the thesis introduces the project by presenting an overview of the history, core values, and future vision of PBT. Chapter 2 outlines the theological framework for the project. The methodological approach to the project is provided in chapter 3 by describing the format of the project, participants, project sessions, and evaluation methods. An interpretation of the findings of the project through three angles of evaluation is provided in chapter 4. The final chapter of the thesis contains the conclusions and implications of the project's findings as well as personal and theological reflections on the project.

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1. Hereinafter "PBT."

2. This is a draft produced orally through an audio recording interface, as opposed to a written draft. As will be seen, this draft was produced using an oral translation methodology. The oral draft exists as an audio file that can be edited, shared, transcribed, and reproduced in a variety of formats.

### Title of the Project

The title of this project is “Evaluating an Oral Draft of Luke 8:4-15 in Uduk.” The term “oral draft” serves to encompass the nature of the project as distinct from producing a written draft. I discuss this aspect of the project in more detail in the methodological section. The specific text and language were selected with an intentional rationale, as I delineate in the discussion of the purpose of the project (see table 1).

### Description of the Ministry Context

PBT began in 1976 with the purpose of using Bible translation as a strategy for church planting and church growth among unreached people groups. The founders of PBT recognized the need to bring the Bible translation and church planting movements into a harmonious, symbiotic relationship.<sup>3</sup>

Table 1. Lack of reconciliation vs. presence of reconciliation

Lack of Reconciliation	Presence of Reconciliation
Bitterness <sup>a</sup>	Peace
Pride	Joyfulness
Apathy	Hope
Complacency	Contentment
Lack of energy	Excitement
Negativity	Vibrancy
“The Blues”	Happiness
Brokenness	Love
Turmoil	Optimism
	Care for others
	More likely to practice forgiveness

*Source:* Data from David Halle, *Inside Culture: Art and Class in the American Home* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), table 2.

*Note:* Since not all data were available, there is disparity in the totals.

<sup>a</sup>Only one respondent gave this response.

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3. For a more detailed overview of the history and founding of PBT, see <http://www.pioneerbible.org/heritage>.

## CHAPTER II

### A THEOLOGY OF THE SPOKEN WORD OF GOD

Bible translation is a multifaceted work. Those who engage the process of translating Scripture cannot expect success without thorough preparation, including proficiency in linguistics, biblical languages, exegesis, anthropology, sociology, communication theory, and other related fields. However, as vital as such fields of study are for achieving quality results in a translation project, the crucial ingredients of a good Bible translator are theological in nature. While linguistics, biblical studies, and the social sciences certainly inform the Bible translation process, they are tributaries that ultimately converge with the river of theology, and all flow together to bring Scripture into a language for the first time (see figure 1).

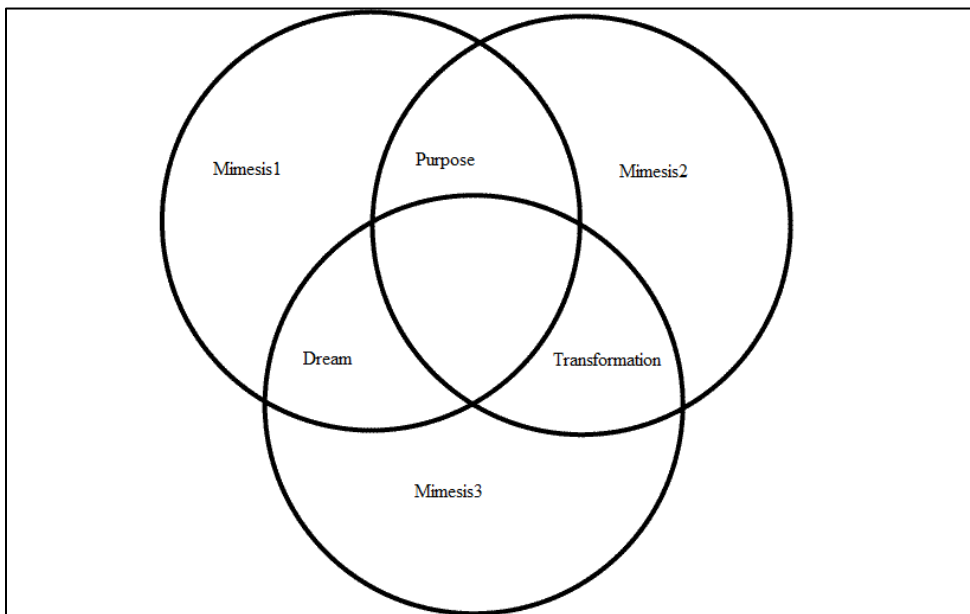


Figure 1. Venn-diagram with transition points.

## The Voice of Scripture in the Early Church

The earliest Christians did not have access to the entire corpus of writings that most of the Christian church has come to know as Scripture. The NT canon in its present form was established by the fifth century, thus formalizing the collection of writings that comprise Scripture. One of the major reasons early Christians began to transcribe, copy, and collect various writings that they deemed authoritative was the need to define what constituted orthodox Christian beliefs as a response to and defense against teachings that were deemed heretical. Henry Chadwick describes the rationale behind the development of a written tradition of Scripture:

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In the first century the Christian Bible had simply been the Old Testament. Authority resided in this scripture and in the words of the Lord, which long circulated in oral tradition. . . . The authoritative standing of this oral tradition continued to be high even after the saying and doings of the Lord had been written down. . . . But the controversy with Marcion and the Gnostics gave a sharp impetus to the control of authentic tradition which a written document possessed and which oral tradition did not.<sup>1</sup>

In this way, the increasing role of divergent and controversial teachings fueled the development of an authoritative collection of writings in order to mitigate the influence of these perceived threats to the heart of Christianity.

It is naturally difficult for Christians today to conceptualize Christendom without Scripture as we know it—and even more difficult to conceive of these writings as independent documents circulating regionally among congregations. This difficulty is understandable due in part to the historical gap between us and the early church as well as our deep appreciation and reverence for Scripture. However, while textuality certainly

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1. Henry Chadwick, *The Early Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 42-43.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This project was designed to provide a substantive field testing of an oral translation methodology among immigrant speakers of a language that does not yet have a translation of the entire Bible. I evaluated the data collected from the project through the analytical framework of themes, slippage, and silences.<sup>1</sup> This rubric of analysis was applied to the three frames of triangulation. My exegetical analysis of the back translation represented my perspective as researcher. The comprehension check with the focus group represented the insider perspective. The comparative analysis of the two back translations by Jeff Wilhoit, an experienced Bible translator, represented the outsider perspective. This chapter provides an overview of the results of this analysis as well as my interpretation of these findings. The aim of this analysis is to test for consistency and cohesion among the themes, slippage, and silences that surfaced from the three angles of evaluation.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Description of Results**

The method for reporting the data from the project I am using will highlight the themes, slippage, and silences as they emerged from each of the three angles of evaluation. I am therefore combining and synthesizing the data from these angles and

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1. Sensing, 197-202.

2. Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 248-49.

discussing them collectively from a thematic standpoint. It is my hope that this scheme provides for a more cohesive, intuitive presentation of the data than looking at each angle separately.

### Themes

The search for recurring patterns among the three angles of triangulation has the potential to highlight critical findings from the data. The approach to synthesizing themes that I chose to implement for this project is “a sorting, organizing, and indexing of the material that enables [one] to locate internally consistent patterns that often fit within existing knowledge.”

#### ***Naturalness and Clarity of the Draft***

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from all three angles of evaluation is that of how natural and clear the oral draft is, which is accessible to me only through the back translation given my lack of proficiency in Uduk. My initial impression of the back translation of the oral draft was that it reads smoothly and demonstrates flexibility and freedom on the part of the translation team. For example, the use of direct speech in verse 9 (“And then, his disciples heard this and asked, ‘What does this parable mean?’”) shows that the team was willing to deviate from the original structure and the

#### ***Faithfulness of the Draft to the Original Language***

Another major theme that emerged from my analysis of the back translation is the faithfulness of the draft to the original language. An example of this strong literal sense of the draft is the use of the term “scatterer” in verse 5, which displays a highly literal translation of ὁ σπείρων. I found it especially interesting in my analysis of the back translation that the use of “scatterer” displays an even more literal translation than the

source text, which renders this as “farmer.” As this is the case, it seems that the most logical explanation is that the translation team took cues here from our key terms discussion, in which I described to them the nature of ὁ σπείρων and the subsequent repetition of two other forms of this word later in the verse (σπεῖραι and σπόρον). Such decision making on their part reflects a desire to remain as faithful to the original as possible while still communicating the meaning clearly.

Another example of the translation team’s displaying faithfulness to the original language is found in the way they chose to translate κατέχουσιν (which is unique to the Lukan version of this parable) in verse 15 as “cling.” Although this word was not one of the key terms I selected for this passage, we had some significant discussion about this word during the translation session. The translation team was initially unclear about the meaning of the word “cling” that is used in the source text. I explained to them that κατέχω can take meanings such as “hold firm, hold fast, keep, retain.”



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## APPENDIX A

### Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

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## APPENDIX B

### Exegetical Analysis of Luke 8:4-15

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