unfoldingWord® Literal Text

Front Matter

Version 38

[en]

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unfoldingWord® Literal Text-English

an unrestricted literal version of the Bible intended for translation into any language as a tool for use by Bible translators

Overview

The ULT began as an open-licensed adaptation of The American Standard Version . It has since undergone a careful comparison to the original biblical languages, using the best tools that are available to modern scholarship, and made to reflect the forms of those languages as far as English grammar and understanding will allow. The ULT is thus intended to provide a 'form-centric' rendering of the biblical text from the original biblical languages (Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Aramaic, and Koiné Greek) into English. This increases a translator's understanding of the lexical and grammatical composition of the biblical text by adhering closely to the grammatical (i.e. parts of speech) and syntactic (i.e. word order) stuctures of the original languages. For translators who do not speak English, we intend to translate the ULT into the other major languages of the world.

Viewing

To read or print the ULT, see the latest published version of the ULT project on Door43 at https://door43.org/u/Door43-Catalog/en_ult/. (Any ongoing development may be seen at https://door43.org/u/unfoldingWord/en_ult/.)

Contributors

Contributors to this work are listed in the `contributor` field in the manifest file at https://git.door43.org/Door43-Catalog/en_ult/src/master/manifest.yaml.

Introducing the ULT

The ULT (unfoldingWord® Literal Text) is a form-centric (and thus "literal") version of the Bible in English. It is intended to be used alongside the UST (unfoldingWord® Simplified Text) and other translation resources to give English-speaking mother-tongue translators (MTTs) a more complete understanding of the messages communicated in the Bible. The purpose of the ULT text is to allow a Bible translator who does not have reading knowledge of the original biblical languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek) to "see" the grammatical forms of those languages. Therefore, the goal of the ULT text as a translation resource is to copy the Original Language (OrigL) form as much as possible yet still be understandable in English or other Gateway Language (GL). For MTTs who cannot read the OrigL text, the ULT provides a sense of how these messages of the Bible were communicated in the OrigL. It is anticipated that the ULT and other resources will be translated from English into the world's GLs so that MTTs worldwide can use them as a set of resources for making accurate translations of the Bible into their own languages.

The ULT stands in the range of literalness somewhere between a very literally translated user Bible (such as the New American Standard Bible [NASB]) and an English interlinear text. An English interlinear text is designed to render OrigL words into their individual and basic ("literal") English meanings without regard to understandability of the overall English text. On the other hand, a very literally translated user Bible tries to adhere as closely as possible to the OrigL but must sometimes compromise in favor of English idiom and expression in order for the text to be both grammatically correct and readily understood. The ULT negotiates a path between these two kinds

of texts. For example, the ULT reproduces the OrigL idioms even when they are not English idioms, relying on a translation note to explain the meaning. In that way, the translator can see the original expression, and also the meaning. The ULT does not substitute English idioms or expressions. However, if an OrigL grammatical form would give the wrong meaning or no meaning at all, the ULT will use the English form in that case so that the ULT can also meet the demand of reasonable understandability in English.

Retaining Original Forms and Structures

The unfoldingWord® Literal Text (ULT) is designed to be used as a tool for Bible translation in conjunction with the unfoldingWord® Simplified Text (UST) which can be viewed at https://git.door43.org/Door43-Catalog/en_ust, the unfoldingWord® Translation Words (UTW) at https://git.door43.org/Door43-Catalog/en_tw, and the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes (UTN) at https://git.door43.org/Door43-Catalog/en_tn. It is not an end-user Bible, which seeks to transform all of the structures of the original biblical languages into those that are natural and idiomatic in the target language. Instead, unlike the UST and unlike an end-user Bible, the ULT is designed to reflect the *forms* of the source languages, so that the MTT can see what they are. By using the ULT, the MTT can "look through" it to see how the original Bible expressed the biblical ideas.

Therefore, the editors of the ULT have retained the grammatical and syntactic structures of the original as much as the target language (English or other Gateway Language) will reasonably allow. If the original structure is ungrammatical in the target language, then it has been changed into a structure that is grammatical in the target language. It does no good to have a translation that a MTT using this tool cannot understand. But as much as the target language will allow, the structures of the original have been retained while translating the ULT. For English, it is often possible to retain nouns as nouns, verbs as verbs, etc., but their order in the original sentence often has needed to be changed.

In addition to the grammatical forms, the ULT has also retained the idioms and the figures of speech found in the original languages so that the MTT can consider them and use them if they communicate the right thing in his target language (i.e. a minority or Other Language [OL], not Gateway Language). If these aspects of the original language text are changed in the English version (or other Gateway Language translation) of the ULT, then the OL translator will never see them. Furthermore, their accompanying explanations (found in the unfoldingWord® Translation Notes) will not make sense.

The ULT and the UST are designed to be complementary tools for use by an OL translator. These tools are made to be as useful as possible, which means that the ULT retains original language structures that would not always be retained in an end-user Bible. Therefore, you must understand that the ULT will often lack naturalness (and sometimes also lack clarity) because it aims to reproduce the original language structures and figures of speech that the GL may not normally use. However, in places where the ULT lacks clarity, there will be BOTH a Translation Note to explain the meaning of the structure for the OL translator AND a clear rendering of the original meaning in the UST. Together, the UTN and the UST will provide the meaning of the text wherever that meaning is in doubt in the ULT. In this way, the various tools work together to provide an OL translator with more complete information about both the form and the meaning of the biblical text as written in the original languages.

One specific way in which the ULT and UST are complementary tools concerns the selection of meaning in the original language texts. There are many instances in the biblical text where the meaning of a word or phrase in the original languages is ambiguous. In those cases, the ULT should retain the ambiguity of meaning, if possible. In contrast, the UST should select the most probable meaning and express that meaning according to its own translation method. NOTE: Where the meaning of the original language is linguistically ambiguous but seems clear from the context, the ULT has often selected that meaning.

Further information

Further details about translation decisions in the ULT can be seen at https://git.door43.org/Door43-Catalog/en_ult#overview.

Alignment of the ULT with the Original Languages

The words and phrases of the ULT have been manually aligned with the original Hebrew or Greek words that they were translated from. Because this is a literal translation, the alignments are largely one-to-one (compared to the UST which has much more complex alignments). The alignment information is stored within custom z-aln fields in the USFM source files. Alignments can be viewed graphically in the translationCore checking program downloadable from https://www.translationcore.com/, and in translationCore Create and translationCore Study apps.

Ongoing Development

Development of the ULT is ongoing and although the bulk of the work has now been completed, consistency checking within the ULT and detailed checks against the original languages are still in early stages, especially for Old Testament books other than Ruth, Ezra, Esther, Obadiah, and Jonah. Any suggested improvements can be passed to the ULT team via the Issues page at https://git.door43.org/unfoldingWord/en_ult/issues.

Contributors

unfoldingWord® Literal Text Contributors

Nicholas Alsop
Scott Bayer
Larry T Brooks, M.Div., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary
Matt Carlton
George "Drew" Curley, M.Div., PhD, Professor of Biblical Languages
Dan Dennison
Jamie Duguid
Paul M Fahnestock, M.Div. Reformed Theological Seminary, D.Min. Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Michael Francis
Laura Glassel, MA in Bible Translation
Jesse Griffin, BA Biblical Studies, MA Biblical Languages
Jesse Harris
C. Harry Harriss, M.Div.
Alrick G. Headley, M.Div., Th.M.
Bram van den Heuvel, M.A.
John Huffman
D. Allen Hutchison, MA in Old Testament, MA in New Testament
Jack Messarra
Gene Mullen
Adam W. Nagelvoort, M.Div. Academic Ministries, Columbia International University
Timothy Neu, Ph.D. Biblical Studies
Kristy Nickell
Tom Nickell
Elizabeth Oakes, BA in Religious Studies, Linguistics
Perry Oakes, PhD in Old Testament, MA in Linguistics
James N. Pohlig, M.Div., MA in Linguistics, D. Litt. in Biblical Languages
Ward Pyles, M.Div., Western Baptist Theological Seminary
Susan Quigley, MA in Linguistics
Dean Ropp
Joel D. Ruark, M.A.Th., Th.M., Ph.D. in Old Testament, University of Stellenbosch
Larry Sallee, Th.M Dallas Theological Seminary, D.Min. Columbia Biblical Seminary
Peter Smircich, BA Philosophy
Doug Smith, M.T.S., M.Div., Th.M., Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
Leonard Smith
Suzanna Smith
Tim Span
Dave Statezni, BA Orig langs., M.Div. Fuller Theological Seminary
Maria Tijerina
David Trombold, M. Div.
Aaron Valdizan, M.Div., Th.M. in Old Testament, The Masters Seminary
James Vigen
Hendrik "Henry" de Vries
Thomas Warren, M.Div., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, D.Min, Reformed Theological Seminary
Angela Westmoreland, M.A. in Theological Studies (Biblical Language track)
Henry Whitney, BA Linguistics
Benjamin Wright, MA Applied Linguistics, Dallas International University
Grant Ailie, BA Biblical Studies, M.Div.