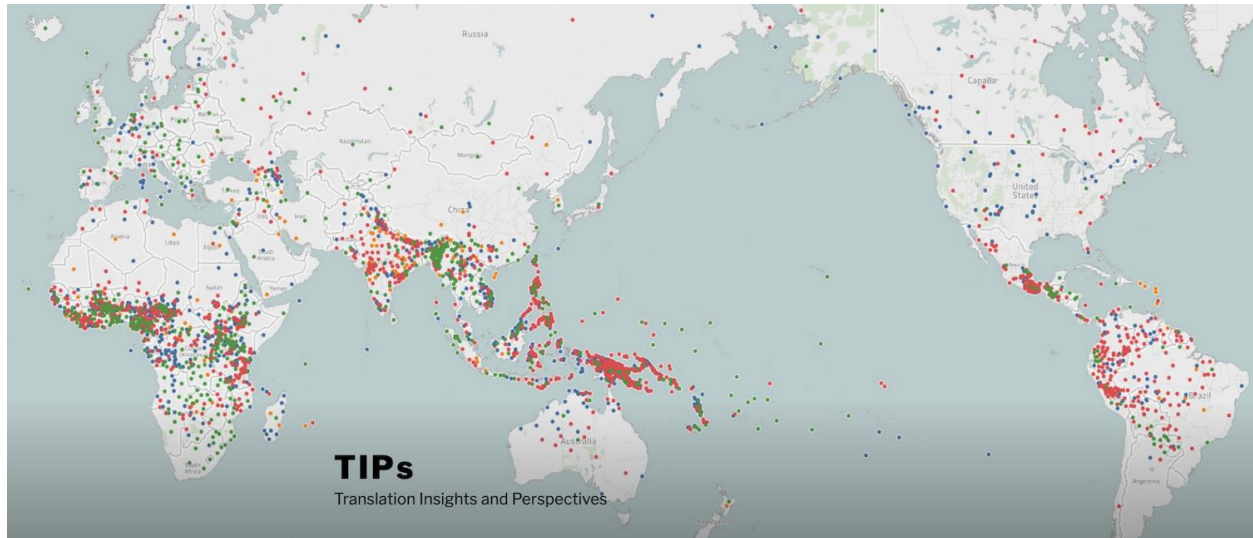


What is the Translation Insights and Perspectives (TIPs) website and how can it help your Bible Society?

January 20, 2020 By Andrea Rhodes



Last year – the Year of Indigenous Languages – you may have heard about the launch of a [new website](#) called Translation Insights and Perspectives (also known as TIPs). But what is it, who is behind it and what value can it bring to your Bible Society? These questions and more are answered in this Q&A with Jost Zetzsche, who manages the website. Jost, who works part time for UBS, has a background as a technical translator.

Q1: What is the *Translation Insights and Perspectives* website?

Jost: The vision of the [Translation Insights and Perspectives website](#) was to build something to help Christians around the world understand the value of Bible translation, and also expand their horizons about the biblical text. It does this by exposing them to the different ways other languages express certain concepts in the Bible. Put simply, it curates insights and perspectives about the Bible, gleaned from hundreds of languages and translation projects.

Q2: In what ways can the *Translation Insights and Perspectives* tool be of use to Bible Societies?

Jost: I can think of three main ways that it can be of benefit to Bible Society teams and the audiences they serve:

1. It can help translation teams to find solutions for difficult words and concepts

[Translation Insights and Perspectives](#) can be a useful source of information and inspiration for translation teams who are wrestling with how to express certain words or biblical concepts in their language. Seeing how hundreds of other languages have chosen to handle it could help them to come up with a suitable solution. There are already 2,000+ insights from more than 500 languages available, and that will keep increasing. (2026 update: there are now app. 80,000 insights and more than 1000 languages)

Please do share the website with your translation teams and translation consultants as it could really prove useful.

2. It provides valuable and enriching insights that can be used for Bible engagement

Exploring the Bible through multi-lingual lenses is the unique offering of [Translation Insights and Perspectives](#). As well as using it in your own personal and/or staff devotions, and using its content for sermons, you could also share it with your audiences in different ways, encouraging them to explore the Scriptures in more depth.

I live in a very small, parochial town in the United States, and the people in my church only really know that English and Spanish Scripture exists. But I've been telling them about the website and it's been so exciting to see how many people in our church have been going there to look up verses from their daily devotions to broaden their understanding of what they're reading. They are dealing with languages every morning that they wouldn't otherwise encounter or even know about! *Translation Insights and Perspectives* is helping them to widen their horizon about the biblical text and the world in general.

3. It can help your Bible Society demonstrate the value of Bible translation (and get support for it)

Many people don't really think about Bible translation or understand the need for it. Sharing some of the eye-opening and enriching ways that other languages convey the Word of God is a great way to build on the work your Bible Society is already doing to make them aware of the vital and hard work of Bible translation.

[Translation Insights and Perspectives](#) can help you demonstrate the huge value Bible translation brings – not just to the communities waiting for their Scriptures, but also to the global Church, which can benefit from the unique perspectives that each and every language brings.

You could, for example, use snippets from the website in your magazine articles or newsletters about Bible translation projects as a way to draw people's interest and encourage them to help support the vital and enriching work of Bible translation.

Q3: Can you give some examples of the enriching insights on the website?

Jost: The concept of '[forgiveness](#)' is an interesting one to look at because we have back-translations from quite a few languages. In Western Parbate Kham, forgiveness is to 'unstring someone'. The opposite of this is holding a grudge, which they express as 'have someone strung up in your heart'. In Koonzime, it is translated as 'removing the bad deed-counters', because in that culture, they lay out bad deeds symbolically – usually using strips of banana leaves to represent them.

Another beautiful insight is how some Chinese translations use [a specially developed 'godly' pronoun](#) instead of the masculine pronouns that we are restricted to using in English and many other languages. This means that God isn't limited to a human gender but has his own divine gender. Although this 'godly' pronoun isn't used in all Chinese Bible translations, this is a story worth telling – that this huge language is able to convey that God is neither man nor woman.

Note from the editor: a particularly intriguing insight is how 'belief/faith' are expressed as 'lose feathers' by one language in southern Nigeria. What does losing feathers have to do with faith? [Go to the website to find out!](#) (Click on the list of back translations.)

Q4: In your opinion, what is the most important and unique thing that the website offers?

Jost: Last year I presented the project to a non-Christian audience – indigenous language activists in Canada and the USA. I was worried that they would react negatively because it was about the Bible, but they were really interested in it. This is because exploring how different languages approach a text that is central to billions of people shows the value that each language can bring to the world, whether it is small and struggling or widely-spoken.

And that's the crazy and beautiful concept of *Translation Insights and Perspectives*: you may come from a small language group that is dying out – a language that the young people may not want to learn any more – and then you find a tool that pinpoints your language and says that it has something valuable to offer the world. That is something very special, both for people from that language group and for everyone else, too, who can learn something enriching from them. That's a very tangible benefit that the website can offer and is a very practical way of capturing the incredible richness of the global Church.

Having said that, the interface is currently only available in English, with just a few of the stories translated into languages that they relate to. This is due to the practical hurdle of getting large amounts of material translated into French, Spanish, and other languages but we are looking into solutions.

Q5: Can Bible Societies contribute to what's on the *Translation Insights and Perspectives* website?

Jost: Absolutely! The more insights and perspectives from different languages, the more enriching and valuable the database becomes. I would love to hear from Bible Societies or others who have stories to share about how their Bible translations have expressed things in unique and interesting ways.

Bible Societies can submit a story [via this page](#) on the website, or email me at jzetsche@biblesocieties.org. Thank you!