



# **Distance Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Developing Workers for the Bible Translation Movement**

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SIL Americas Area

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# Outline

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- Distance Training for Underserved Parts of the World
- Institutional Issues
- Creation/Adaptation of Materials
- Faculty Training & Future Directions



# Overview

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- Explores some of the opportunities and challenges of distance education for people involved in the Bible Translation movement
- Explores the uses new technology to provide new possibilities for preparing the next generation of Bible translators and providing recurrency training for current translators
- Looks at some goals, objectives, methodologies, and technologies for course development
- Explores the variety of training opportunities



# Overview (2)

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- Explores tools for meeting the needs of underserved trainees, in languages other than English
- Serves those who may not be able to travel to locations where courses are offered
- Identifies uses for academic degrees or for personal and professional development
- Provides examples drawn from current distance training offered and under development in the SIL Americas Area
- Explores possibilities for further, on-going learning or recurrency training while residing in the trainees' place of ministry



# Introduction

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- Distance education been around for thousands of years
- Arguably, most of the New Testament books can be thought of as a form of distance education
- Shelton and Saltsman (2005) note early examples in England in 1840 and in the United States since 1873
- The technology and delivery of instruction has changed greatly in that time, beginning with correspondence courses and adopting changing technologies such as closed-circuit television, satellite communications, and other two-way audio and video delivery methods, as well as one-way media such as educational television programs on public television stations, and interactive methods such as web-based courses
- Although technologies and methodologies have changed, the goal of communicating knowledge, skills, and understanding from a more knowledgeable person to another who needs that knowledge remains the same



# Introduction (2)

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- Developing countries and communities around the world are faced with the challenge of meeting the needs of their multilingual, multicultural populations
- Language program planning, sociolinguistic planning, community literacy efforts, multilingual and multicultural education, and literature promotion are becoming increasingly important to minority communities
- These needs require trained people to address them
- Capable and experienced trainers are in limited supply
- It is crucial to provide training opportunities to prepare consultants and trainers, so that minority language communities themselves can take charge of, and take responsibility for, their own translation, sociolinguistic and multicultural education needs



# Introduction (3)

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- Wycliffe is moving from a **doing** to a **training** emphasis—Wycliffe’s Vision 2025 recognizes that the Bible translation task, specifically, is too large for expatriates to accomplish, and therefore recognizes the need for training others to participate in the task
- These others need training just as much as expatriates, though with different emphases and possibly different topics, and the pool of experienced and qualified trainers needs to be significantly expanded



# Definitions and Background

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- **Distance education (DE):** “Classes in which the majority of the instruction occurs when the student and instructor are not in the same physical setting. A class is considered a distance education class if students receive more than one-half of the instruction at a distance.” (Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, 9:1:A)
- **Online education:** Instruction offered through the World Wide Web
- **Blended (hybrid) instruction:** offered face to face (F2F), with online support for the F2F class; may include some instruction F2F, with some online instruction; what Cunningham and Billingsley (2003) call *curriculum webs*





# Definitions and Background (2)

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## Open and Distance Learning (ODL):

- Generally includes:
  - Teacher and learner separated in time and/or place
  - Offered by certified or accredited institutions: Equivalent to on-campus courses in rigor and content
  - Mixed-media courseware—web, print, audio, video
  - Interactive communication between learners and teachers—may be synchronous (chat, Skype) or asynchronous (forums)
  - May include a face to face component, or may be entirely at a distance
  - May be created by teams of specialists or individuals  
(Commonwealth of Learning:  
[www.col.org/resources/publications/trainingresources/Pages/intro.aspx](http://www.col.org/resources/publications/trainingresources/Pages/intro.aspx))



# Opportunities for Distance Education

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- **Opportunities:** As noted previously ODL is often viewed from an institutional perspective—educational institutions offering **formal** courses as an extension of their academic mission
- This is certainly of interest to us in the academic preparation of workers for the Bible translation movement
- The presenter was involved in setting up GIAL's distance education program, and developing and teaching initial courses online. After a hiatus of several years, GIAL is once again offering an online course (but the presenter is no longer involved with GIAL)



# Opportunities for Distance Education (2)

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- Of equal or greater interest to me is
  - the possibility of **informal training** using online courses (such as SIL's eLearning courses (among others))
  - informal recurrency through blogs, author web sites, YouTube videos, etc.
  - distribution of training materials and interactive sites
  - Bingham and Conner (2010) have focused on transformative aspects of this informal learning through social media: they identify online communities, sharing corporate stories through blogs and tweets, and the greater productivity of collective intelligence
  - general use of computer mediated communication (CMC)



# Challenges for Distance Education

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- Traditionally, challenges have included availability of technology, but this is becoming less of an issue through media convergence and wider availability of cell phones and other tools capable of receiving and playing audio and video suitable for training pastors and other workers in remote locations
- Current challenges include the present lack of trainers and training materials in the national and minority languages, but these are currently under development—we have seen tools demonstrated at this conference that can help address this need for training materials, both for end users and for trainers



# Online Training for Bible Translation

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- In 2005, SIL set up [distantCourses.org](http://distantCourses.org) to offer training courses and materials online; these have since been moved back to the [sil.org](http://sil.org) site
- GIAL started to teach graduate credit courses online
- Courses offered include mostly non-credit courses, either self-paced or instructor lead, though a few academic courses are also offered
- Some materials are available in French and Spanish as well
- The Spanish side of [distantcourses.org](http://distantcourses.org) is currently used primarily for academic courses offered in Spanish (more later)



## Online Training for Bible Translation (2)

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- In 2003, SIL and the Universidad Ricardo Palma in Lima Peru, set up a joint program, called CILTA (Curso Internacional de Lingüística, Traducción y Alfabetización), offering a number of academic courses in Spanish
- Their web site ([diplomadocilta.edublogs.org](http://diplomadocilta.edublogs.org)) identifies intermediate courses in linguistics (phonology, morphology, sociolinguistics, semantics and pragmatics) and applied linguistics (translation, literacy methods and programs, and writing systems)
- Students travel to Peru from all over Latin America to take these courses



# Online Training for Bible Translation (3)





# Online Training for Bible Translation (4)

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- To help the students get the most benefit from their time in Peru, some online courses were developed for students to take before coming to CILTA
- Current online courses (pre-CILTA) include:
  - Introduction to Linguistics
  - Second language acquisition
  - Phonetics
  - Intercultural communication (proposed)
  - Cultural anthropology (proposed)
- These course are academically oriented and rigorous, but are not currently offered for academic credit





# Online Training for Bible Translation (5)

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- Some 40 students have taken these online courses since they were first offered in 2009 (including overlap of the same students in multiple courses) (Guajardo, personal communication)
- To better prepare these and future students, we are looking to complete the pre-CILTA course set
- Blended courses are being developed to supplement and support classroom courses offered in Lima; these materials may later be offered in other venues, and possibly online



# Online Training for Bible Translation (6)

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## Communication Systems

- Course communication includes asynchronous methods, such as forums, email, and messaging
- Course communication may include some synchronous interaction, such as Skype or chat



# Online Training for Bible Translation (7)

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- Collaborative projects can include
  - **Blogs** (Merriam-Webster online defines as “[short for *Weblog*] (1999): a Web site that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks provided by the writer”)
  - **Discussion** boards
  - **Wikis** (a web structure that allows any authorized user to add or modify content)
  - Study groups, with group projects



# Online Training for Bible Translation (8)

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- Courses not currently offered at all may be developed to help students be better prepared for the Bible translation task, including post-CILTA courses as well
- Some considerations for online training:
  - Courses are instructor-led
  - Time zone considerations are not a significant issue for synchronous delivery in the Americas area



# Goals, and Methodologies

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- **Goals:** to prepare both majority tongue (Spanish) and mother tongue translators with the courses and materials they need
- **Methodologies:** to teach online courses using a variety of methodologies—the format is especially conducive to a constructivist model of collaborative learning. The constructivist model focuses on working together to build shared knowledge, rather than emphasizing a one-way communication of knowledge from teacher to learner.



# Online Course Technologies

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- **Technologies:** courses are currently being developed using the Moodle learning management system, an **open source** system in use in 214 countries, at over 57,000 locations, by over 48 million users, taking over 5 million courses
- Moodle can be used as a simple, password restricted content delivery system
- In this case, course content can include web pages and links; files, such as pictures, audio or video clips, PowerPoints or PDFs, etc.



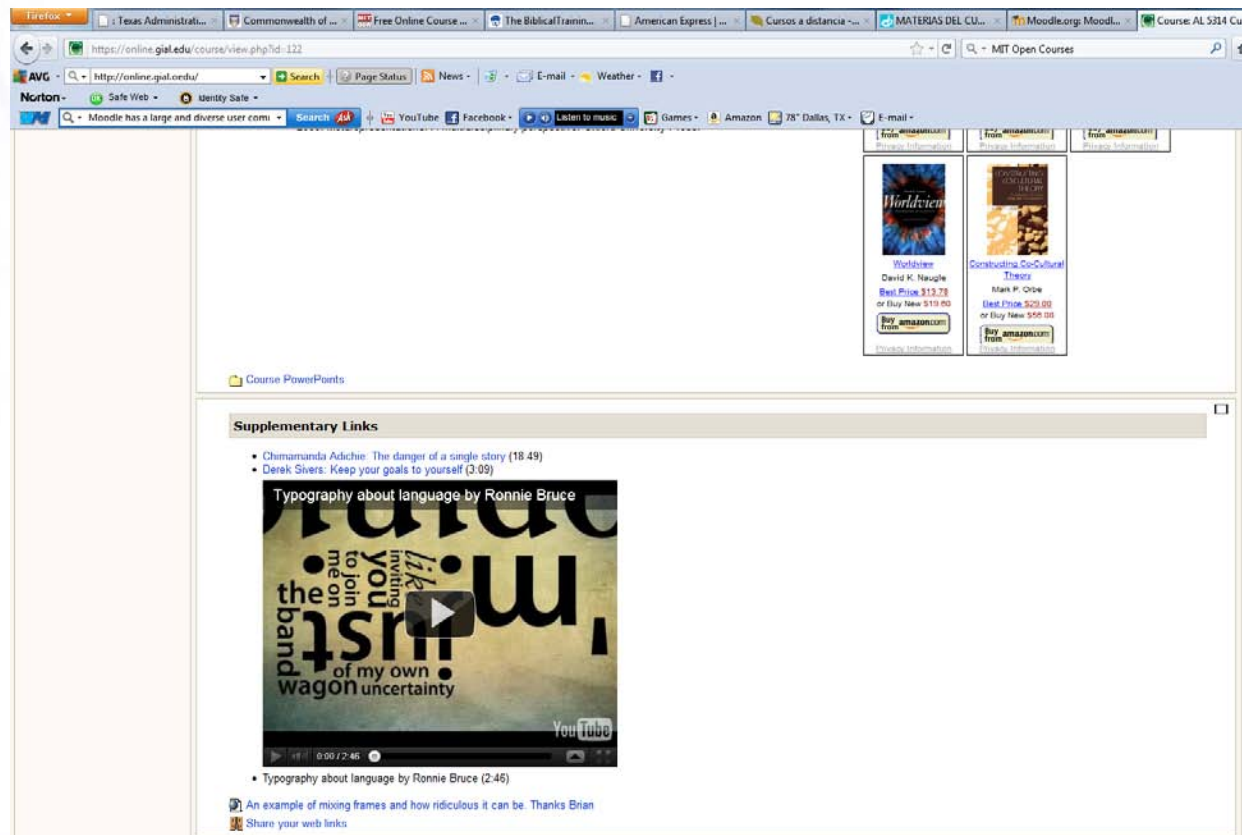
# Online Course Technologies (2)

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- Moodle can be used to manage and report on activities for a complete course:
  - user interaction and various kinds of messages among participants: forums (threaded discussions), chats (conversations where participants interact simultaneously), private messages (like email)
  - assignments
  - tests and quizzes
  - collaborative projects and assignments (wikis & blogs)
  - grading and reports

# Online Course Technologies (3)

- Links to other resources, such as web pages, search engines, web sites and YouTube



The screenshot shows a Firefox browser window with multiple tabs open. The active tab is a Moodle course page at 'https://online.gsu.edu/course/view.php?id=122'. The page features a 'Supplementary Links' section with the following content:

- Chimamanda Adichie: The danger of a single story (18:49)
- Derek Sivers: Keep your goals to yourself (3:09)

Below the links is a YouTube video player for 'Typography about language by Ronnie Bruce'. The video player shows a play button and a progress bar at 0:00 / 2:46. Below the video player, there is a link: '• Typography about language by Ronnie Bruce (2:46)'. At the bottom of the page, there is a note: 'An example of mixing frames and how ridiculous it can be. Thanks Brian' and a 'Share your web links' button.





# Teacher Training Components of Preliminary Training Courses

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- Teacher training includes a number of components:
  - Adult learning theory and differences between classroom teaching and teaching online
  - Instruction and practice in the use of the technology
  - Materials preparation—skills and practice in the use of technologies to develop course components
  - Awareness of the importance of timely interaction and feedback with students—since they are used to almost immediate feedback in online interactions, they expect rapid response to assignments and projects online



# Distance Training of Advanced Subject Content

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- It is possible to earn, and a growing number of institutions are offering, undergrad and graduate degrees with no residential component
- I have studied and taught online at the graduate and undergraduate levels, including an MA earned entirely online
- Some subjects actually lend themselves to better content delivery online than face to face
- Some graduate subjects, in which much of the interaction is written, can be taught as effectively online as face to face



# Distance Training for Underserved Parts of the World

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- Distance education is a concept that has been widely adopted in much of the developing world (Commonwealth of Learning)
- Cultural differences are a key challenge for developing training and training materials across cultures—this is compounded by differences in training methods and philosophies that are incorporated into teaching and learning technologies
- The Moodle system has been widely used and localized in 214 countries and over 75 languages; I have seen anecdotal evidence focusing specifically on benefits of the system as applied to cross-cultural teaching



# Institutions: Training Teachers for Online Delivery

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- Instructor qualifications: same as for classroom courses
- Institutional Faculty Support
  - Provides faculty support services specifically related to teaching via an electronic system
  - Assures appropriate training for faculty who teach via the use of technology
  - Provides adequate equipment, software, and communications access to faculty to support interaction with students, institutions, and other faculty
  - May provide development resources for materials and specialized learning tools, such as videos and animations



# Institutions: Resources for Learning

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- Ensures that appropriate learning resources are available to students; some developed, some purchased
- Evaluates the adequacy of, and the cost to students for, access to learning resources, and documents the use of electronic resources
- Institutional Commitment to Support Online Courses
  - Policies for faculty evaluation include appropriate recognition of teaching and scholarly activities related to programs or courses offered electronically
  - Demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program or course for a period of time reasonable and sufficient for students to complete the course or program



# Institutions: Evaluation and Assessment

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- Evaluates the program's or course's educational effectiveness, including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction



# Creation/Adaptation of Materials

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- Content creators (instructors or course creators):
  - Instructors write outlines, indicating links; lessons in text files
  - Gather data files (such as electronic documents, audio and video recordings) and data sets to format and optimize for print (PDF) or web delivery
  - Recruit and train course developers and creators



# Creation/Adaptation of Materials (2)

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- Materials producers
  - Prepare course graphics and other media
    - Scan or otherwise prepare, create, and optimize graphics
    - Create animations and video or audio clips for web
  - Design and create course template and navigation—may use a standard Moodle template
  - Create pages, inserting text and media, and test
  - If the course contains large audio or video files, it may be necessary to create course DVD or CD to send to students





# Media Used for Course Materials

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- Text files in PDF or web page format
- Data files (Excel files)
- Graphics
- Animations, with audio (Adobe Flash)
- Audio clips
- Video clips



# Online Learning Results

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- Positive results:
  - Students have appreciated flexibility of taking courses on a time or location shifting basis
- Negative results:
  - Most of our classes have been too small to allow much benefit from discussion (1-4 students per course)
  - Online courses often take more instructor time interacting with students than equivalent classroom courses



# Faculty Training

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- Initial training:
  - A number of faculty originally received training offered by an outside trainer/consultant
  - Courses have been taught by three instructors so far
- Present training:
  - We are developing a series of training courses to teach faculty how to develop and teach online courses
  - Trainer and developer has graduate degree in higher education, with coursework and experience in online course development and instruction at several universities



# Future Direction

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## Course selection

- Present offerings:
  - Several foundation courses that students take before going to Peru for classroom courses
- Future offerings:
  - Complete package of foundation courses
  - Course support as blended courses for classroom courses currently taught, with the possibility of online offering later
  - More popular courses of interest to a broader clientele
  - Post-CILTA courses covering material needed by translators and literacy workers beyond those currently offered in Peru



# Future Direction (cont. 2)

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## Current Limitations

- Availability of faculty time for development with limited faculty: online courses should be completely developed before advertising and offering online
- Limited support capabilities for research intensive courses (library resource availability)
- Limited enrollment makes it hard to justify development time and effort
- Limited possibilities for accredited courses at present, though there is interest on the part of other universities and seminaries throughout the Americas



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# Resources: Some Organizations

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- **BiblicalTraining.org:** Free courses taught online by seminary professors—“The classes that make up the BiblicalTraining Institute offer you a free education of unparalleled quality... and are all firmly evangelical.”
- The **Commonwealth of Learning (COL)** was “created ... to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies” ([www.col.org](http://www.col.org))
- **MIT Open CourseWare:** “MIT OpenCourseWare is a free publication of MIT course materials that reflects almost all the undergraduate and graduate subjects taught at MIT” (<http://ocw.mit.edu/about/>)



# About the Presenter

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## Robert Reed

- Has worked with WBT and SIL since 1974, in linguistics consulting and training—in Colombia for 16 years, and in Dallas since 1995
- Was a founding faculty member of GIAL, where he developed the framework for its online programs and course support
- Has developed and taught many courses (including online courses) at several universities, in English and Spanish



# Presenter's Qualifications

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- **Education**

- Ph.D. (Humanities)
- M.A. in Communication; M.Ed. in Higher Education, including studies in adult and distance education; M.S. in Computer Science; M.A. in Linguistics

- **Experience**

- Developed and taught online courses for several universities for graduate and undergraduate credit
- One graduate degree earned entirely online
- Distance courses taken at various levels, using various media: online and video oriented
- Online program administrator and course developer
- Experience with bilingual course development