Using Feature Phones to Promote Literacy and Scripture Engagement

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We really like SIL's Reading App Builder, Scripture App Builder, and the new Bloom Reader app for Android smartphones. We have used them to create and convert many books. But there is one problem: many of the people in the language communities in Chad do not own an Android phone. Yes, some day Android phones will be more prevalent, and their numbers *are* growing, albeit slowly. But we are interested in what we can do with the phones many people have right now: feature phones.

We have discovered three workable options: (1) easy reader video books, (2) Go Bible, and (3) PhotoBible. You might find them useful as part of your literacy and Scripture Engagement strategies.

1. Easy reader video books

It is possible to create a narrated easy reader book for a feature phone (which can also be played on an Android phone). What you are creating is a little video that includes a line or two of text for each picture.

Figure 1

A great source for Bible story pictures is: https://freebibleimages.org or the video templates or pictures available through SIL International Media Services: https://www.internationalmediaservices.org/bible-story-scripture-video-templates.

A word about the choice of pictures: feature phones have very small screens so the pictures should be simple without a lot of detail and with good contrast. Photos like the one in *Figure 1* are ok because it is simple. Photos like the one in *Figure 2* are not as suitable because the details are lost on a small screen.

Figure 2

After testing, we found that the black and white drawings were the easiest to interpret and the black text with white background was the easiest to read, as in *Figure 3*. It is true that using black and white images does not exploit the use of a phone which displays in color. But the goal is ease of reading and easily interpreted pictures. If you have more than two lines of text for the picture, it would be better to make a duplicate slide and put the additional lines of text on *that* slide, rather than reduce the font.

Figure 3

The video is created by using the video export feature of **PowerPoint**. First, create the slides, choosing the *standard slide size (4:3)* which displays correctly on a feature phone, and add a line or two of text to each picture. If possible, keep the minimum font size to not less than 66. A font any smaller than that is challenging to read on the smaller feature phones.

The purpose of these videos is to help weak or new readers to gain fluency, so the text should be limited to one or two lines. Insert a separate text box for each portion of the phrase. Breaking the phrase down into parts is what reading theory calls “chunking” and is

helpful to new readers. This will enable you to highlight each text box for the narration. The slide in *Figure 4* is made with three text boxes and the first is highlighted.

Figure 4

Once all the pictures (slides) with their texts are prepared, go back and add an animation feature to each slide. Select each text box (not the ***text*** but the ***box***) and add the animation **Fill Color**. You can define the color under **Effect Options** (see *Figure 5*). We suggest a fill color of yellow or orange.

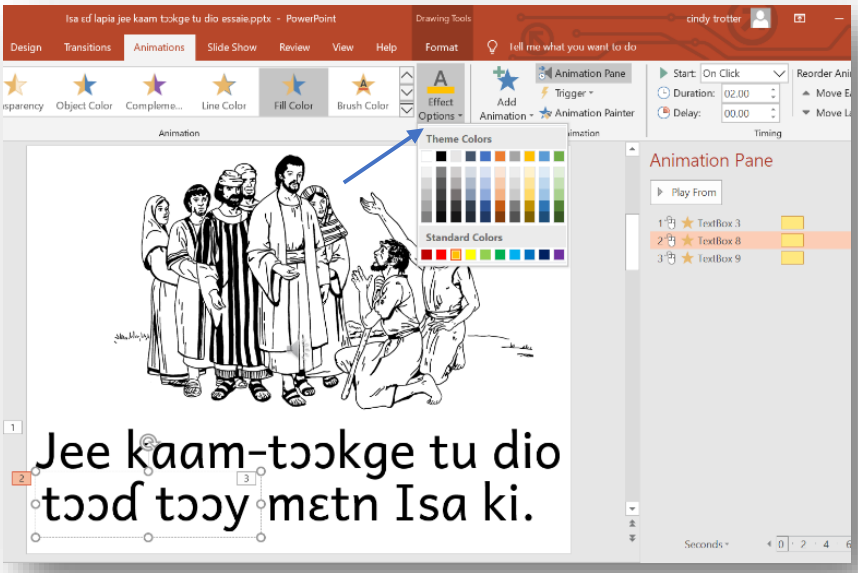

Figure 5

Once all the animation features are made, you are now ready to narrate the video. Go to **File** and **Export** your presentation as **Create a Video**. Choose the option **Record Timings and Narrations**. This will open your presentation in slide show. Go through your presentation activating the animations and narrating as you go.

To verify your narration and timings, go back to **Use Recorded Timings and Narrations** and choose **Preview Timings and Narration**. You can re-record individual slides by selecting **Slide Show ➢ Record Slide Show**. Then select either **Record from Beginning** or **Record from Current Slide**. If you click on the play button at the bottom of the slide, you can check the recording for individual slides.

Once you have previewed the timings and narration and are ready to create the video, choose **Create Video**.

PowerPoint will export the presentation into a MP4 format which can be played on an Android phone. To play the video on a feature phone, you will need to convert the MP4 file

into a 3GP. You can use a free program, such as *Format Factory* (http://www.pcfreetime.com), to convert your video to 3GP.

Figure 6

As with any literacy or Scripture Engagement materials, it is important to test the video on a real phone with several people in the community, making any necessary revisions before widely distributing. In addition, the final page should include copyright information, e.g. the same as appears in the Bloom book for Android.

2. Go Bible

Wikipedia describes Go Bible as follows:

> Go Bible is a free Bible viewer application for Java mobile phones. It was developed by Jolon Faichney in Surf City, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia… Go Bible is installed like any other midlet by copying the .jar and .jad file to the cell phone by USB or Bluetooth.[1]

The Go Bible is already published in many languages including English and French. These and others can be downloaded from the web. You can also create your own Go Bible in your project language with Paratext.

Your Paratext program must first have the *Pathway* software installed. The Pathway installation is available here: https://software.sil.org/pathway/. Once that is installed, you are ready to create your Go Bible. For Paratext 8, from the **File** menu, choose **Export to Pathway**, follow the choice of which books to export and then choose **Go Bible** when you choose the *Destination*. For Paratext 9, the **Export to Pathway** option is under the hamburger menu for each translation window.

Once the files are created, a pop-up window informs you that the two Go Bible files (.jad and .jar) are created and you can open the file destination (folder) from that window. From that folder in your computer you will need to copy over the .jar and .jad files into your phone in order to install the Go Bible. The Go Bible app needs both files in order to run but

[1] For even more information on the Go Bible go to https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Go_Bible#Go_Bible_site

opening either one will install the Bible on your phone. After that you should find an icon for the Bible on your phone as an app or it may be under the JAVA icon.

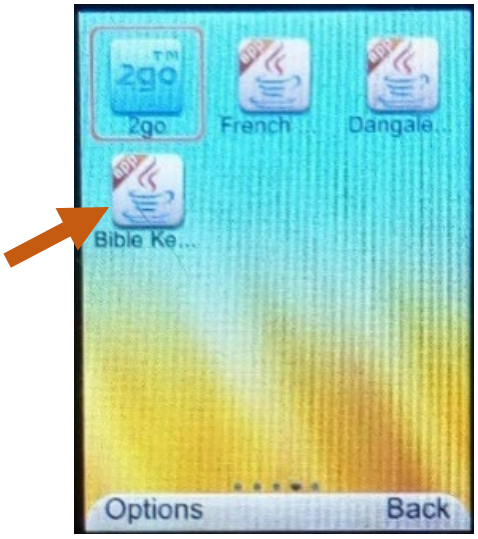

Figure 7

If you get lost and cannot find the files on your computer, they should be located under C:\Documents\Publications\NTKF\Scripture\go_bible_2019-12-11_141919. NTKF is the name of our Paratext project. You can also find them by doing a search for “Go Bible” on your computer.

Special characters in Go Bible

It may be that special characters will not display correctly on your phone. Getting them to display correctly is dependent on the phone, the characters used in your language and the font. Your Paratext consultant may be able to help you to arrange the Paratext files so the font works for the phone you are using to run the Go Bible.

Here is the method we have used in Chad where in one language, the glottal stop ' appeared as a box and the tilde on the n̰ did not display correctly under the n. (see *figure 8*)

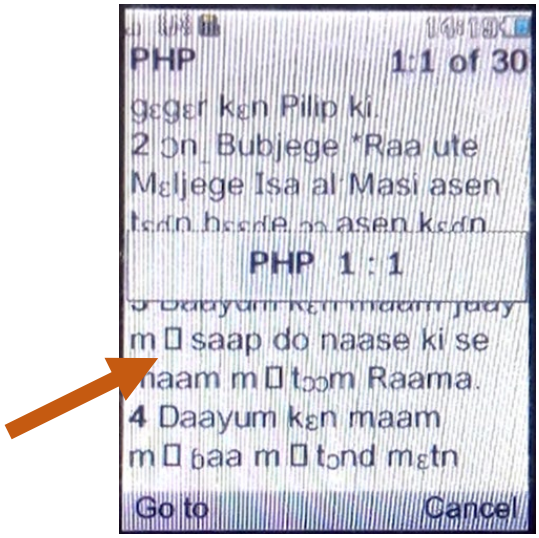

Figure 8 – Uncorrected font,
with some characters appearing as boxes

To create a copy of a Paratext project which will display special characters better on feature phones:

1. Open your project in Paratext.
2. Go to the **Project** menu and choose **Manage Books.**
3. Choose **Copy Books.**
4. In the **To Project** either choose the previous one or click **New.**
5. If you chose **New**, then create the project.
6. When you have the project, click **Select All Files.**
7. Click **OK**.
8. Now you can make the necessary changes to the copy of the project using **Edit** ➢ **Replace**.

In this case, after creating a new project, we selected all the instances of ' (a straight glottal stop or apostrophe) and changed it to a normal apostrophe. For the n̰ we selected all those instances and changed them to ñ. For some phones, the implosive letters will not display and will appear as boxes. If this is the case, you might need to experiment and choose another Unicode character in the Paratext project. As you can see in *figure 9,* certain letters appear as if they are in a different font, but the text is still readable.

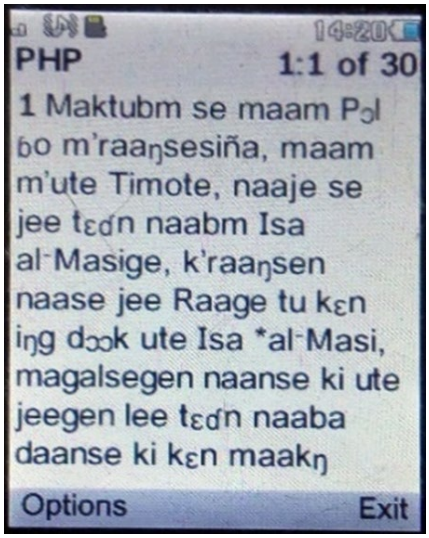

Figure 9 – Corrected font, with special characters appearing (although sometimes as if they are in a different font)

We have found that even after correcting the font and testing to see that it displays correctly on a certain brand of phone, another brand of phone still might have problems. We have found this to be true with the implosive letters. If you have the time and access to these different phones, you could experiment to find a solution that might work for all the phones. Even so, when we have transferred a Go Bible to someone and the font does not display exactly correctly on their phone, it is still readable, and they are pleased to have it.

An interesting feature of the Go Bible is that you can copy a verse and send it as an SMS along with any comments.

To share the Go Bible from your feature phone you will need to send both the .jar and .jad file via Bluetooth.

3. PhotoBible

Most of the inexpensive phones available in Chad do *not* run Java so they cannot use the Go Bible, but they *do* display pictures, videos and have a memory card slot. An option for these phones is the *PhotoBible* (https://lingtran.net/JPEG+Scripture+Publishing+for+Simple+Phones).

PhotoBible is a conversion of USFM Scripture files into .jpeg files, 2-3 verses at a time. The first step is to upload your Paratext files to the Bible Drop Box site (http://freely-given.org/Software/BibleDropBox). The usual upload is the back-up zip file of your project. If you only want to create a PhotoBible of certain books, those which have been consultant checked, for instance, you could create a separate back-up zip file and use that instead of the complete project. The site then converts them into .jpeg files (photos) of 2-3 verses. We found the upload process very simple, and even possible in the village with a slow internet

connection. After you upload your Paratext files, you go back to the site about 1-2 hours later and download the PhotoBible zip file(s) which are available on the site for 14 days.

A New Testament is 150 MB and an Old Testament is 350 MB. Here is what the files look like on an inexpensive phone in one of the languages of Chad that has a screen size of 3.5 x 4.5 cm.

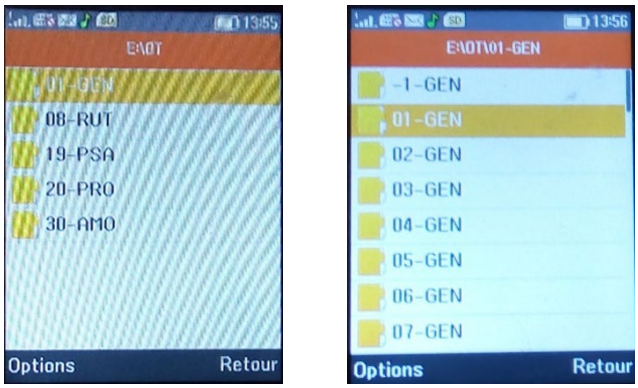

Figure 10. Each book has a folder, and sub folders for each chapter

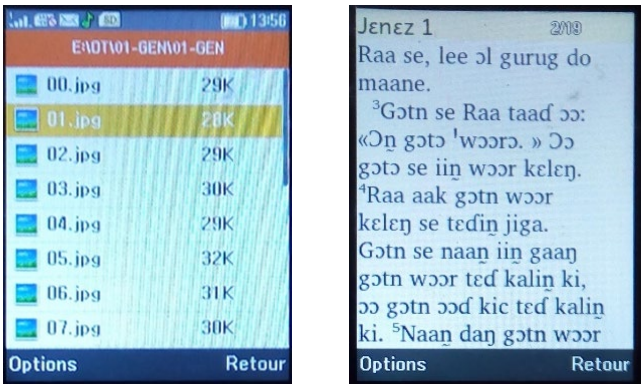

Figure 11. Each chapter is a JPEG picture file: 01.jpg, 02.jpg, etc.

With this size of screen, the text is very readable. A screen any smaller than this is difficult to read.

Distribution of a PhotoBible can be a challenge. Feature phones do not support zip files, so the picture files can only be shared by Bluetooth one at a time. Alternatively, the folder with all the photos can be transferred via cable to the phone from a computer, or the PhotoBible can be shared by memory card.

Conclusion

We hope that this information has inspired you to try creating a video reading book, a Go Bible, or a PhotoBible. Even a feature phone can be used to promote *reading* as well as *listening* to Scripture!

We would appreciate hearing from you on how you have used these ideas or for any suggestions or ideas of how you use feature phones in your area for literacy and Scripture engagement.

Please feel free to contact us at: cindy_trotter@sil.org