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FINDING THE WORDS

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In September 2015, Access Agriculture invited us to a translation workshop.

Before the workshop, we received scripts in English so we could translate them into Luganda, one of the major languages in Uganda.

As soon as the script popped into my email, I got to work, happily translating the text, word-for-word. I was able to finish the work in time and hand it in before the workshop began. As it turns out, that was the easy part.

During the workshop, we were put into groups of three. In my group all the participants were to translate from English into Luganda. We had to finish the scripts before we could start recording the voices.

One of my partners at the workshop read through my script, and said “We have to fix this script, so that the people who speak any one of the dialects of Luganda can understand it.”

You see, Luganda is a language with many dialects and some of the words I had written are only found in my dialect. Luganda’s four main dialects are: Busiro/Kyaddondo, Bannakyaggwe, Bannabuddu, and Abakooki.

Words can be quite different between the dialects. For example, some people call a container “seppiki” while in other dialects it is “obulobo”. In some

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dialects, people call pruning “okusalira” while others say “okuwawaagulira”.

The Baganda are a proud people, and some of them might not want to admit that they do not understand a word.

My fellow translators helped me to find words that are widely understood. I had to change almost the whole script. We finally came up with the right script. Not all speakers of a language understand the same words, but it is often possible to find words that are common to all of the dialects of a language.

When making a translation it is important to find words that everyone knows.

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