

It may be enough to mention one further language in conclusion. The Kannada (Kanarese) version, in a language spoken by 14,400,000 persons in the state of Mysore and neighboring areas, was finely revised by an outstanding series of scholars and published as recently as 1934, though the New Testament definitive edition is earlier. One of the revisers' terms of reference was that slavish literalness should be avoided, and the result is that there is a certain amount of excellent paraphrase. The cry is now raised that this is interpretation rather than translation, and that room should have been left for other interpretations. It remains to be seen if any steps need to be taken to meet this protest, but it is an illustration of the knife-edge division between slavishness and interpretation, along which it is well-nigh impossible to walk without slipping.

The total picture is one of great vitality and activity. Advanced areas and backward ones; revisions and new translations; rapid and accurate workers and slower, less well-equipped ones; those with many problems and those with few; strong committees and weaker ones—all together create a remarkable effect for one who is able to see the whole picture: "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear," some tares among the wheat, some withering in a few places; but the promise in part and the fulfillment in part of what in India we call "a 16 anna crop" of the Word that will not return void but will accomplish that whereunto it is being sent.

Translation Procedure in Huichol

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In producing the first draft of the New Testament in Huichol it was necessary to make the fullest use of the informants' time. During a large portion of the time spent in preparing the translation there were no qualified informants close at hand; either the informants or I made special trips for the purpose of working intensively together for short periods of time. When informants were to be found nearby, their personal responsibilities kept them from giving more than a small part of their time to the work. For this reason I found it useful to proceed along the lines described here.¹

When translation was undertaken for the first time, I read sentence by sentence from the Reina-Valera Spanish version to the informant, who rendered the sentence into Huichol. He did not understand literary Spanish very well, and perhaps because of his lack of familiarity with

¹Eugene A. Nida (*Bible Translating*, New York: American Bible Society, 1951) has remarked on this approach to translating in his chapter on translation procedures. This report on its use in the field may have further value. The Huichol are a Mexican tribe of the Sierra Madre Occidental.

the national language tended to give stilted renderings of the text.² Furthermore, as the first believer out of a tribe of five thousand, he was unavoidably lacking in Biblical background.

More valuable was a rendering based on a translation from Greek into the type of Spanish the informant is familiar with. This is a rural dialect of the kind used in literature only as a means of casting a character low on the social scale. This "hill-billy" dialect, however, gave the informant a much more lucid idea of the text to be rendered, and when slanted so as to conform to the overall patterns of syntactic structure in Huichol, served as a means of producing some rather well translated passages.

This approach to translation was only a step from the procedure used to initiate the rest of the work. Instead of a preliminary Spanish rendering, syntactically weighted to give good Huichol, I undertook to make preliminary renderings in Huichol directly from Greek in comparison with versions in modern languages. I did not expect that this preliminary manuscript would be any more than a point from which to begin discussion of each sentence of the text. Verbal forms were particularly suspect, inasmuch as the aspect and mode systems of Huichol differ considerably from those of Greek and English. Certain features such as clause sequence indicators and stylistically relevant particles were profitably incorporated into the preliminary rendering on the basis of the observation that the principal informant, if left to himself, tended to overlook those features. On the basis of this initial rendering the informants were able to recast sentences and substitute vocabulary with greater freedom than formerly, since they had no bias from a second language presented to them, and since they were taught to regard the preliminary renderings as in need of reworking in all points.

For a procedure of this type to be workable it seemed to be of primary importance to establish a rapport with the informant in which he considered his work to be largely that of critic. Correspondingly a large part of my task was to train the helpers' critical faculties and to encourage the attitude expressed by one informant: "Why in the world did you say it in that way? It's too bad that you need so much correction." I presume many would not be so frank, but such an indication that the informant felt responsible for the correctness of the translation was worth the rebuff.

At times it became necessary to criticize the informant. When he recast a text into good Huichol, it was sometimes at the expense of fidelity to the original. Because the form he proffered made good sense and was usually good doctrine, it required more effort to return it to conformity with the original—a contemporary instance of the principle of "the most difficult reading is the correct one."

On the rare occasions when two informants could be present at the same time, renderings that arose from our combined discussion seemed

² See *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 8, No. 3, July 1957, pp. 131-135, in which I deal with this informant's difficulties with Spanish.

to all of us to be more consistently valuable than a similar amount done by one informant. Going over books separately with more than one informant, as pointed out by Beekman,³ had the advantage as well of making use of each man's strong points, while tending to cancel out weaknesses.

To be sure, before attempting even a tentative translation in this way a fair amount of speaking experience in the native language was prerequisite. Especially with reference to word order and sentence construction, it was necessary to develop a certain *sprachgefühl* ('feeling for the language') in the native language, not only for a syntactic "stock-pile" sufficiently diversified to handle the modes of expression found in the original, but also for a fund of alternate forms to be offered to stimulate the native speakers to find the most appropriate expression for each text.

At all times it was helpful to have in stock a number of such alternate renderings. In searching for more elusive lexical items, approximation through as extensive a list of partial synonyms and descriptive phrases as I could compile, together with discussion of culturally parallel situations, served more than once to uncover new words that were needed. With regard to syntax, it became almost standard practice to indulge in the Huichol custom of never saying a thing the same way twice if two different ways are possible. This provided a wider range of choice for the best diction and suggested still further possibilities to the informant. The almost universal alteration in repetition of a phrase, in which affirmative mode is substituted for narrative mode, aspect shifted, word order changed, and so on, has been a boon to translation, because the repeated form is likely to be good Huichol. On the other hand, Scripture memorization in the American tradition is rendered difficult; there is no reason why a verse ought to sound exactly the same twice.

When the preliminary manuscript provided an occasional clear rendering, it often led to an impasse. Because the informant was trained to criticize and, having been given a good rendering, did not feel criticism necessary, he remained silent. Because I had trained myself to suggest alternate renderings, his silence became the occasion for a proliferation of alternatives to the limits of my imagination. When all this effort resulted in no further comment from the informant, I concluded that the verse was totally incomprehensible to him and launched into a fuller explanation of doctrine, ancient history, or whatever seemed most appropriate. On my last recourse, a suggestion that he attempt to state by himself the thought which I had, as far as I knew, failed to communicate, he would finally reply, "Well, wasn't that just what you said at the beginning?"

One of the greatest advantages in preparing a preliminary rendering of Scripture was the opportunity to study questions of exegesis and interpretation as they occur in the text, without having to hurry because the informant was on the point of falling asleep. Merely reading a

³ Beekman, John: "The Value of Using Several Translation Helpers," *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1952, pp. 24-25.

commentary or two was no insurance against making mistaken renderings; but the closer the commentary study and the preparation of the preliminary Huichol text were to each other in time, the greater certainty I felt that difficult passages were being dealt with correctly, or at least fairly.

The preliminary rendering also made it possible to control the informant's reactions to larger syntactic patterns. One of the four informants who helped tended to miss the relationship between clauses, which in Huichol can be expressed with all the delicacy of Greek participial constructions, though in a different way. This informant's strong point lay more in the area of finding vocabulary and of expressing shades of verbal inflection. However, when the gist of a complex sentence or a paragraph could be given him in Huichol, with connectives and subordination markers already supplied together with the sentence elements, his acumen at the lower levels of phrase and word structure was more intelligently exercised. Once he straightened out the vocabulary of the whole unit, he was able to return and improve the statement of interclausal relationship, a thing he probably would not have done otherwise.

Because of the situation in which a translation procedure of this type was needed, I considered the more efficient utilization of the informants' time justification enough for its adoption. A time record for the first draft of St. Luke indicates approximately that for every five hours spent working with the informant, eight hours were spent in preparing for work with him. In the Revelation, 18 hours and 45 minutes, or 45.4 per cent of the total time, were spent in reading; 12 hours and 39 minutes, or 30.5 per cent, in preparing the preliminary rendering; 9 hours and 57 minutes, or 24.1 per cent, in actual informant work. The total time spent on this one book came to 51:17 man hours, of which 31:23 man hours were spent in preparation. By not having to stop in midpassage in order to check the meaning of a text, by forming exegetical opinions before confronting the informant with a doubtful passage, it was unnecessary to let the informant's mind wander while mine wondered. All words and phrases could be discussed in context, though on a few points it was found desirable to check words out of context.⁴

The Huichol New Testament as it now stands in first draft possesses more literary continuity and is more intelligible than had it been done sentence by sentence from a Spanish or Greek original without reference to a preliminary rendering. Because a whole paragraph could be brought

⁴The word originally used to render "sin" was rejected when, without warning and entirely apart from a translation situation, I asked the informant what one would be referring to by the term then used to render "sinless." Since his reply—"a corn field"—was even more unexpected than my question, I delved further and found that the word is related to the idea of virginity. An unpicked corn field is still in its pristine state, much as we speak of "a virgin forest." According to use the word that we had found for "sin" means, when applied to people, those who have had sexual intercourse, whether legal or illegal. By extension the term also includes murder and robbery, and nothing else. The word first came to light in the early bilingual stages of language study, in which it was the regular equivalent of Spanish *pecado* 'sin'. In the popular usage of rural western Mexico, *pecado* actually means little more than the Huichol word.

to the informant's attention as a unit, and because he was not bothered by discussions and interruptions that from his point of view were unproductive, it is probable that each of the informants had a rather good idea of the content of what he was translating, despite his lack of previous familiarity with the Bible.

In order to insure accuracy it was necessary to bear in mind constantly the possibility that one might be going over a passage too hastily, simply because the wording of the preliminary rendering was intelligible in some sense or other. By constantly making the informant choose from several possible renderings, and by urging him in all cases to suggest even better ones, it is probable that less of my own peculiar dialect has been perpetuated.

Missionary Linguistics in Surinam

J. Voorhoeve

The Missionary Commission

The missionary linguist proceeds from the missionary command "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . ." He brings the content of the Christian message, as codified in a written document, the Bible, to someone else as recipient of this message. For him the central missionary command can be further formulated: "Go and teach all the people the Bible." He cannot bring the original document to the people. The Bible is not a magic book, and must never become so. The magical formula, however, even when not understood and unanswered, is thought to retain its power. The Bible, on the contrary, is a message given to another people in a special historical situation. This message must be made known, understood, and responded to. The message has no strength of its own, nor in itself, but only in its relation to the one who responds to it.

Therefore the missionary linguist has the special commission to make this message, which, in regard to its form, is bound to a historical situation, intelligible to someone else, so that man may respond to it. He should, therefore, not only know the message itself, both as regards form and content, but also the situation (the language and culture) of the one who is to respond. Only then can he make the message intelligible. But with the introduction of this principle of intelligibility a number of misapprehensions threaten to come into the work of the linguist. For intelligibility would appear to be a pure linguistic problem, so that the linguist thinks that he may and should decide in his own way what is intelligible and what is not.

He rightly presumes, for instance, that the recipient can most clearly