| LANGUAGE | USAGE | DATE |
|---|---|---|
| Jolof (Gambia) | Yesu Krista | 1882 |
| Tula | 'Isa Almasihu | 1929 |
| Habbe | Yesou Kristo | 1933 |
| Kabyle | Aisa el-Masih | 1833 |
| Bambara | Yesou Krista | 1937 |
| Dagbani | Yisa Masih | 1953 |
| **Asia** | | |
| Turkish Osmanli | 'Isa Almasih | 1819 |
| Malay | 'Isa Almaseh | 1731 onwards |
| Malay (Bode) | Jesus Keristus | 1938 |
| Batak | Jesus Kristus | 1911 |
| Bare'e (Adriani) | 'Isa i Masehi | 1913 |
| Javanese | Jesus Kristus | 1829 |
| Sundanese | Jesus Kristus | 1854 |
| Balinese | Jesus Kristus | 1910 |
| Toba-Batta (v. d. Tuuk) | Si 'Isa si Miniakan | 1867 |
| (revision) | Jesus Kristus | |
| Sangirese | Jesus Christus | 1875 |
| Tae | Jesu Karistu | 1933 |
| E. Sumbanese | Jehu Karitu | |
| W. Sumbanese | Jezu Karetu | |
| Timorese | Jesus Neno Anan | 1941 |

# A Programme for Missionary Language Learning

*Wiliam A. Smalley*

*(Reproduced by permission from the International Review of Missions, January 1953)*

The modern science of descriptive linguistics has provided at least two important by-products of value to missions. The one, which has been exploited increasingly over the last fifteen years, is the technique of scientific language analysis applied to the unwritten languages in use in regions to which many a missionary still goes. This contribution, thoroughly on its feet and expanding as a missionary tool, we will not discuss further.[1]

The second by-product of descriptive linguistics is not being exploited except on a sporadic and individual scale. It has to do with language learning and language pedagogy in all the major languages of the world.

[1] For some relatively non-technical discussion of this phase of linguistics see Eugene A. Nida, *Bible Translating* (American Bible Society, New York, 1947), pp. 62-64, 100-27, 241-76.

Ultimately of importance to all new missionaries—not merely to those engaged in studying unwritten languages—it means that missionary language-learning can be removed from its present slow and halting programme with slow and halting results, to a new speed, fluency and accuracy.

The present typical situation is that for most written languages there is some sort of published grammar outline for foreigners, a sketch which is often very old, rarely very good, usually out of print. Such 'grammars' are generally produced by individuals who may speak the language well but who have little sense of language-structure other than the usually inexact folklore which our schools teach us about our own language, or Latin, or French, or any other European language which we may have happened to study. These concepts, applied to still other languages, result in strange concoctions with Latin labels but no flavour of real language-structure or content. They are often misleading, always wasteful of valuable time and energy. The amount of student time wasted for missionary students of French in Paris by the regulation bad grammars is staggering. Multiply that by the even worse picture on most mission fields, and the total should be cause for real concern.

The great Adoniram Judson (whose dictionary of Burmese is considered excellent) discusses 'number, gender, case, nominative, objective, ablative' [2] and other categories in his Burmese grammar, for a language which, when studied without the prejudices of Indo-European, turns out to have no grammatical gender (but an elaborate system of classification based in part on the shape of objects) no cases and no grammatical number distinction. A noun is neither singular nor plural in Burmese, but numberless (whereas in English it must be either singular or plural). Only by adding a numeral or other expression of quantity can the idea of number be put across.

What is even more serious, the fine ramifications which actually do exist in the grammar are, in such cases, overlooked, and the resulting impression is false. Even grammars written by philologists and other scholars are usually as bad, unless the grammarian has a training and experience wider than Indo-European languages, and unless he is used to seeing a language in terms of its own proper structure, not in terms of what he thinks a language should be. Knowing how to speak or read many languages is no qualification for language analysis, any more than driving a large number of types of vehicles is qualification for automotive engineering.

The missionary is almost certain to rely upon such inadequate and usually misleading materials as we have sketched. He learns to read and to pronounce the language—sometimes quickly, sometimes only after long effort, sometimes poorly, sometimes well—but he never has a consciousness of the sound system of the language as a system, with its elements interworking and influencing each other. He learns to speak, and eventually to preach—sometimes fluently, clearly, accurately, sometimes barbariously—but he has no clear-cut picture of the way in which the language goes together, an actual structure, far different from his native

[2] William Cornyn: *Outline of Burmese Grammar* (Baltimore, 1944), p. 6.

tongue. Even though he speaks it well, his sense of its structure may be so ephemeral that he says, 'It has no grammar; people just speak euphoniously, the way it sounds best to them'.

Traditional grammars and language-courses almost inevitably place the primary emphasis on written language, giving only second place to speech itself—making the representation of speech primary and speech secondary. Almost invariably missionaries learn to read before they even give serious attention to learning to talk. [3]

Generally a new missionary takes a course of study outlined for him by his senior colleagues, who give him the best help they can, but with the same unfortunate assumptions and approaches which we have mentioned; or he goes to a mission language school where the same criticisms again apply, except that the pedagogy is generally better. Under such conditions on many fields, the average new missionary often cannot be said to speak the language well, to converse easily, fluently and correctly, speaking automatically, without laborious reflexion, at the end of two or more years of language study. Credit is due to the exceptions to this statement. Some missionaries never make a satisfactory conquest of (to English speakers) such difficult features as tone, unfamiliar vowels and consonants, intonation, sentence structure different from ours, and words which have meanings sometimes nearly the same, yet often very different from the English word given in translation. Dr. Nida records [4] that Christian nationals sometimes gradually learn a 'missionary dialect' of their own language, so as to be able to understand and be understood on the mission compound. Yet the labour, the heavy, tiring drudgery that goes into even such a poor grasp of the language as some missionaries carry through their whole ministry is often a credit to the missionary's consecration and zeal.

We certainly cannot advocate, by way of solution, the anachronistic programme that all grammar books be thrown out the window, and that every missionary to Japan learn language analysis, and proceed to study Japanese as he would an unwritten language. We do not advocate such a programme because it would be a waste of time and energy, an overlapping of effort, and because not all missionaries are capable of fulfilling the linguistic task. From a linguistic point of view, and apart from the practical considerations mentioned, however, such a programme is not nonsensical. Spoken Japanese can be analyzed with exactly the same techniques as any other language. [5] Writing does not change the nature of language.

There is a more practical solution. To stop the waste and inefficiency in present-day missionary language-learning on the fields with written languages, those languages can be analyzed by individuals trained and experienced in that work, and the results incorporated in courses according to the best techniques of modern language pedagogy. Both tasks will have to be done. Neither is useful to missions without the other, for

[3] For a better approach, in the order of 'listening, speaking, reading and writing', see Eugene A. Nida, *Learning a Foreign Language* (New York, 1950), pp. 21 ff.

[4] Eugene A. Nida, *Learning a Foreign Language* (New York, 1950), p. 5.

[5] And has been, notably by Dr. Bernard Bloch, of Yale.

the missionary cannot learn from an unadapted scientific description, *nor can an adequate pedagogical approach be made on the basis of the traditional grammars.* Both steps are essential.

Fortunately, a beginning has been made for us in some of the important languages of the world, but most of them European languages for which the missionary has little use. There are valuable courses in such missionary languages as Chinese, Japanese, Siamese, Burmese, Malay, Turkish, French and Spanish. During the last war many of the best scientific linguists in the States were mustered to that task—the analysis and pedagogical presentation of the major languages which American armed forces would need to know. All the courses are built on the same pedagogical pattern. The materials developed through the joint efforts of these specialists are profoundly changing language-teaching and learning in certain American universities to the point at which fluent, correct, automatic conversational grasp of the language may be captured by any average student in less than a year.

This is not the place in which to go into the principles behind the 'Intensive Language Training Programme' sponsored by the Armed Services. They have been outlined and highly recommended in *Learning a Foreign Language.* [6] From the student's standpoint, the essentials for the programme are the manual, [7] a native speaker to imitate or, if he is not available, a set of records published with the manual [8] (or both native speaker and records, if possible), a linguistically trained director, who is not necessarily a native speaker of the language and who therefore is not imitated by the student, but who indicates the points at which the student's work is breaking down and who provides drills and organizes the course. The native speaker is not a teacher, but a model. His utterances are imitated, and it is he who drills the student until his speech is well pronounced, free, rhythmical. The major feature of the course is that it is organized for maximum efficiency. Students are able to use what they learn from the beginning, with no long period of rote-learning without immediate usefulness. They do not learn unnecessary (or untrue) grammar rules, but learn how the language fits together, which is grammar.

These courses, however, which point in the right direction, are not the whole answer. Not many universities [9] in the United States offer even these few languages by this method, although the number is growing. There are practical problems to the using of the manual on the field. Linguistically trained guides are not available there.

There is a further long-range solution which would be a most valuable economy of time, money and trained personnel. It is that practical language-training centres be set up in America and Europe [10] to offer,

---

[6] pp. 32-35.

[7] Usually published commercially by Henry Holt and Co., in its Spoken Language series.

[8] Obtainable from Holt with the manual.

[9] Among the more notable exceptions are Yale, Cornell, University of Michigan, University of California. Not all language courses offered at these institutions are so designed.

[10] *Time* for July 23, 1951 (p. 25), carries an account of the present Army Language School at Monterey, California.

eventually, all the major languages to which missionaries go in any numbers. The centres would be organized along the lines of the army programme, with modifications arising from the needs of missionaries and from the results of research carried on in the centres. For indigenous speakers they would draw from the pool of foreign-language-speaking people of the large city or university near which they would need to be located, with records to supplement the native speaker. They would build a staff of 'guides' trained in linguistic science, each specializing in certain of the languages offered. These staff members would be engaged in directing the course and giving help to students where needed. Some of them would also be engaged in research on new languages, new courses and new techniques of language pedagogy, to widen the scope of services offered to missions.

Ultimately most of the following languages would be taught in such a programme (plus others which have doubtless been overlooked): French, Spanish, Dutch and Portuguese; Korean, the various important dialects of Chinese, Japanese, Formosan, Tibetan; Burmese, Siamese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian; Javanese, Malay; such languages of India and Pakistan as Hindustani, Urdu, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Malayalam, Bengali; Persian, Turkish, Arabic (various dialects), Hebrew, Yiddish; Tigre, Amharic; other such important languages of Africa as Berber, Fulani, Ewe, Hausa, Zulu, Swahili; Malagasy. Languages would, of course, be offered according to demand in any given year, study groups being organized to range in size from one to ten or twelve students. The same director would be trained to supervise more than one language, unless he were giving the major part of his time to analysis and to the preparation of new materials.

Such a programme would have to begin in a small way, for there would be no large stock of trained staff nor the wide number of prepared courses for a large beginning. Valuable institutions could be raised up from the outset, however, and they could eventually mean a wholesale increase in the efficiency of the language-learning years and the early years of missionary ministry.

An objection to the programme recommended here will immediately occur to some: that it is best to learn a language in the environment where it is constantly heard and spoken. If other things were equal, that would be true, and the programme here envisioned is presented with the idea that studies be continued on the field, that the missionary would learn to read and write, to talk and think in native patterns, by learning from his environment. But, for those crucial first months other things are not equal. On the field the missionary learns wrong pronunciations because of wrong guidance (as do, for example, missionaries who pronounce some vowels of Vietnamese like certain French vowels, which are really quite different, because their French grammars of that language tell them they are the same). On the field he is slowed down and sometimes immeasurably handicapped by poor teachers and tutors, grammars and the common misconceptions about languages. On the field it is furthermore sadly true that many missionaries in many areas mix as little as possible with the people outside the line of duty, that they live in

their mission compounds, isolated by walls, lawns, personality barriers and standards of living. On the field it is sometimes even true that present language programmes discourage the use of speech until late in the learning stage. A young missionary who wanted to memorize and use some Bible verses was refused even the possession of a Bible because he had not come to that point in his learning programme. He had to learn the alphabet first, then to read (without necessarily understanding what he was reading) and finally to learn something of the grammar before he could begin to talk—a shamefully wasteful and even dangerous order of learning a foreign language.

A compromise solution might be possible, that in each major language area there be established such a course as we have here outlined, but on the field where the language is used. The advantages are obvious. The objections are of two kinds. At the practical level, first, many linguistic areas draw too few missionaries to make the setting up of a separate institution for the area feasible, whereas as part of a larger institution the one or two yearly candidates could be accomodated (or the course omitted if there were no candidates for that year). Second, that it will take a few years to build up a staff of trained directors for the courses of even one institution (where the same individual could sometimes direct courses in more than one language). The multiplication of institutions inevitably means the demand for a larger trained personnel, which may eventually be forthcoming, but is not so now.

At an ultimately even more valuable level, a central institution could provide the atmosphere and facilities for research, for the analysis of additional languages, for experimentation with language-teaching techniques, and for providing an ever-broadening basic linguistic and pedagogical foundation for further refinements and greater efficiency in the complex problem of learning a foreign language. Far more can be done by workers in a place of mutual inter-stimulation, with university facilities near by, than by one or two persons isolated in each of various spots over the world.

Eventually, perhaps, the major languages could be taught on the field, but central institutions should even then be preserved for those areas which have no institution of their own, and for spear-heading research.

The test lies in the results. Most missionaries on the field do not learn to speak easily and fluently in a year. In the United States, officers of average language-learning ability do speak Russian, or Turkish, or Chinese well in that time.

The goal of the programme is fluent speech in the foreign tongue. The test is accomplishment—'How well does he speak?' The examination is pragmatic—the presentation of situations in which the candidate speaks conversationally, directs a piece of work to be done or in some other way demonstrates his speaking ability. The record shows that it pays.

The value of inter-mission co-operative programmes for mutual problems is proven. Organizations like American Leprosy Missions, the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Bible Societies are examples. Modern missions have profited by the discoveries of modern science,

with the use of such tools as the jeep, the aeroplane, the radio and camera, medicine and surgery, phonemics and morphology (the sister sciences of language analysis). Nothing, however, could be closer to the core of missionary methodology and missionary efficiency than this one single contribution of linguistic science in the last decade: that the overwhelming majority of new missionaries may learn to speak the language in which they will minister, better, more quickly and more easily than has ever been possible before.

---

# The Wild Chaco Tribes

*R. J. Hunt*

PART I

## 1. The Tribes

In the central part of that wild and inhospitable region known as the Gran Chaco, which lies in the heart of South America, bounded on the west by the Andes, and on the east by the River Paraguay, there are living to-day six tribes of Indians, at more or less the same cultural stage. They are called by a variety of local names, but may be described by the titles found in the maps and writings of the early missionaries, viz. Toba, Mataco, Choroti, Chunupi, Enimaga, and Lengua.

The Tobas and Matacos are the distinctive Argentine tribes dwelling, for the most part, along the banks of the Bermejo and Pilcomayo rivers.

The Tobas have been considered, alike by travellers and missionaries, a fine race of people, tall and well-made, lively in manner and fearless in speech, the terror of those who wished to subdue them by force, and the attraction of those who desired to win them to the obedience of the Cross of Christ.

The Matacos and Tobas have, since historical times, lived side by side, ever hostile, but clearly related to each other ethnically and linguistically. Similar in height and physique, they are very different in character. The Matacos are revengeful rather than warlike, morose in behaviour, and cowed in speech, preferring the dark thickets to the open spaces, fearful and suspicious, apparently despised in the past, as indeed, they are at present.

The Chorotis are akin to the Matacos and occupy the Pilcomayo, near the Bolivian frontier. They are few in number, degraded through contract with a low type of civilization, full of disease and stricken with poverty.

The Chunupies occupy the western half of the Paraguayan Chaco, and must have been, at one time, a numerous and powerful tribe. If I may venture a conjecture, the Chunupies are the result of the union of Toba fathers with Mataco mothers, but the friendship is continued