

# Finding Out How Close Related Dialects Are

## Part. II: Conducting a Dialect Survey<sup>1</sup>

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The general problems and principles involved in the conducting of a dialect survey as a basis to mission policy in Bible translation, literature, education, etc., are much the same whether the investigators are highly-trained linguists or linguistically-untrained missionaries. The complexity of the problem which a missionary can handle is, of course, considerably less than that which a trained person can work out. In the suggestions which follow we are assuming a missionary with a short but useful introduction to descriptive linguistics. Others, without even that training, may well find parts of it helpful.

### **Forming Preliminary Impressions and Hypotheses**

In any scientific investigation it is very important for the investigator to take advantage of previously published materials on his problem, even though that material may not be altogether accurate. He may often find useful information in government files, if he knows the appropriate official to contact. Sometimes anthropologists, linguists, and missionaries who have worked in the area can give him important information which they may have gained incidental to their own work or study. Any specific hypotheses which seem worthy of investigation should be noted. Out of a mass of trivia and irrelevant information there may be clues to the actual situation. Direct study can bear this out or find it false, but direct study is the more efficient if there are specific hypotheses which can be proved or disproved.

By this we do not mean that people who are conducting a survey should spend a large proportion of their time interviewing other foreigners and reading books. Rather, as the survey is being planned in advance, and as it is being conducted, every opportunity to gain new clues should be seized, and a record kept of hypotheses. These impressions can never replace an objective survey, but if Missionary X feels very strongly that people of Village A understand people of Village B, but that people of Village B do not understand people of Village A, and if Missionary X knows what he is talking about, there is a clue which may lead to something very important about dialect relationships, and which might otherwise be overlooked. Missionary X will doubtless have a "reason" to offer for the phenomenon. If he bases it on something like the "mentality" of the people, making one group inferior in intelligence to the other, his hypothesis can be politely discounted as being unprovable and contrary to universal anthropological findings. If he has a hypothesis that it is due to marriage patterns, or that the one group has a more difficult consonant system, etc., then his hypothesis is worth investigating. But in either case, his observations of a people's behavior may have been correct, even though the reasons he ascribes to the behavior are not.

<sup>1</sup> Part I, "Language, Dialect, and Communication," appeared in the last issue of *The Bible Translator*.

In forming preliminary hypotheses, a brief pilot survey may be most valuable. By going out for a few days and investigating the situation in a few chosen locations, the survey technique can be perfected, the most useful questions found, and a set of specific objectives or problems can be defined for the larger survey on the basis that they have been found to be important in the smaller area. The results of the preliminary survey should be studied and the plan of the larger survey worked out on the basis of what appears to be most useful to the solution of the problem.

In any area where a dialect problem is severe enough to warrant serious consideration of a dialect survey in order to guide Bible translation, literature, and educational policy, differences between the sound systems of the dialects is almost certain to be an issue. The need for such a survey is often formulated in terms of orthography: "One person pronounces it this way, and another pronounces it that way. How shall we write it?" For this reason—the nature of language sound systems being what they are—it is very important that the investigator have a clear idea of the sound system of at least one of the dialects, and understand what difficulties are involved in the analysis of it before he undertakes the comparative survey.

But whatever the nature of the survey, whatever the state of knowledge of the people conducting it, it is most essential that they have clearly in mind what they want to find out, that they seek in their preliminary investigations to find clues as to what *may* be the answer to their problem, that they test their hypotheses and their procedures in such a "trial run," and that they focus their work on the solving of their problems without becoming sidetracked in irrelevant questions.

### **Assessing Linguistic Distance**

In most surveys of the kind we are describing, the largest portion of the time and effort will be spent on gathering and studying linguistic information. This involves, of course, adequate field procedures, the obtaining of adequate data, and the useful analysis of that data. When we speak of "field work" we do not necessarily mean actual itineration through the whole district to find speakers in their home villages. That is ideal, particularly for more complex dialect situations, and it becomes very important when cultural factors like people's values and attitudes are more important than purely linguistic matters. Sometimes, however, all of the information needed can be obtained in one city, if speakers of the various significant areas can be found. Sometimes the students in a school represent the whole variety. Before field work is undertaken, the investigator should have worked out for himself a schedule of the information he wants to find. Suggestions on the type of information to get are included under the discussions of individual subjects below, but there are some general remarks on ways of obtaining the required information which we can make here.

### **Handling Informants**

As in all linguistic and anthropological investigations, informants must be handled with great care. It may be very difficult to get cooperation and

the needed information in some areas. Elsewhere it will be easy. But, in any case, there should be real consideration of informants. In most situations it will allay suspicion if the investigators inform the people among whom they are working that they have come to find out more about the local language and be free with other information about themselves. The cooperation of local leaders should be politely sought everywhere. It takes time to establish rapport in some places.

The investigator must make sure that his informants are native to the area he is investigating. An informant who has moved into the area some time before may have a mixed dialect which will destroy the findings on a given location. In any very extensive survey, more than one informant in a given location should be used.

The investigator should also be careful to watch for indications that the informant might be altering his speech to fit some hypothetical ideal or some neighboring dialect which has more prestige. The fact that somebody would want to make such an alteration in his speech is very important information which gives a clue about attitudes toward dialect differences. At the same time, however, a systematic investigation will need information about what is actually said under normal circumstances in a given place.

Once, when I was making a small investigation of dialect differences, I noticed that one man I knew altered his speech to conform to that of the area in which I was living whenever I was using him as an informant and whenever he was conscious of the form of his speech. When he talked naturally, he spoke with quite a different dialect. I asked him to which dialect group he belonged, and he insisted he belonged to the one which he was obviously trying to imitate. A bit of investigation with other informants later showed that he was a speaker of quite a different dialect, and it was clear, from their smiles and good-natured banter as they told me, that this was a group of considerably less prestige.

Some of the "do's" and "don'ts" of working with informants in any language work are: (1) Don't bore the informant to death and tire him out by keeping him too long at unrelieved language work. Relax, change procedure, exercise, or change informants regularly. (2) Don't often make the informant repeat the same word or sentence more than three or four times in a row. If you need more repetitions, come back to the same word later. (3) Keep a pleasant, relaxed, friendly atmosphere, but maintain control over the interview. Do not allow unprofitable digressions to take your time.

### **Asking the Right Questions, and in the Right Way**

In any research program such as this, the investigators will want to be careful not to influence results unduly by the questions they ask or the way they ask them. People in many cultures try to answer questions in the way they think the questioner wants them answered—and they may be far from what we would consider the objective truth! The power of suggestion is strong, and injudicious questioning can distort results. Questions should therefore be put in as "neutral" a fashion as possible. This is important in any linguistic work, but it is especially important

in a rapid survey because the investigators do not stay in one place long enough to get the constant kind of recheck which a more permanently located person gets.

Then, of course, the question should also be worked out to get the needed information quickly and without too many "extras". Serious attention should be given to the form of questions before starting out. Various types of questions can be tried in any preliminary survey, and the most efficient approach adopted for the full survey.

One useful device in areas where people have no difficulty with pictures is the line drawing which informants are asked to identify. Line drawings can be realistic representations of vocabulary items ("dog", "finger", etc.) while others can represent simple situations which will elicit a sentence or two: "The man is beating his horse"; "That woman is bathing her child". The latter type will yield both vocabulary and grammar, if well done. A useful method is to present contrastable situations, such as a pair of pictures which will elicit, "The man in this picture is going into the house, but the one in that picture is coming out of the house", or similar explanations.

The use of pictures in this way, if thoroughly planned out to give the desired results, can increase the rapidity of the survey and make the results more reliable, but this does not mean that such aids are essential. Instead, the investigator can point to objects and ask for their names. He can give the name of the object in another language (if the informant knows that other language) and get it that way. He can ask, "What do you call the animal you use for riding and for carrying loads?" The one thing that is best *not* to do is to say, "How do you say 'horse'?" In many areas the informant is likely to want to adapt his speech to prestige dialects anyhow, and every effort should be made to help the informant forget himself and talk in terms of interesting natural situations.

A further caution should be added about the use of interpreters in making such a survey as this, even though occasionally it is necessary. Every precaution should be taken to see that interpreters phrase their questions in a non-leading way and that they have an attitude which will not cause informants to react in an unnatural manner. If interpreters are necessary for communication between investigators and informants, properly planned line drawings for eliciting information become much more important.

### Using Tape Recorders

Tape recorders can be a marvelous help in a survey of the kind we are describing. They can also be a terrible nuisance. The difference depends on the circumstances under which the survey is to be conducted, on whether or not the investigators understand how to take advantage of the recording for getting the answers to their problems, and on the type of equipment, its quality, and the condition it is in.

In most field situations of this kind tape recordings should not replace work with pencil and paper. They should supplement it. One valuable procedure is to make complete recordings of all interviews, or of selected ones. Another is to record certain parts of all or selected interviews—

those parts in which particularly difficult points are under investigation. But in almost any survey the recording should include the various repetitions by the informant, the investigator's attempts to mimic in full, etc. Most of the material should be simultaneously transcribed by hand. When the analysis of the data is under way, the recording will provide a splendid check on the transcription, help to re-establish the phonetic pattern of the dialect in the memory of the investigator, and give clues which were overlooked in the field situation.

Another use of tape recorders in such surveys is to record short natural texts in the key dialects and then play them for informants from other areas, asking them to tell in their own words what the text was about. This will give a crude measure of the general intelligibility of the dialects. The text materials, of course, should be short, natural, and not too "obvious". People can often get the drift of what a text is about, even though they do not understand enough to make the communication of the Gospel possible.

In planning any work with tape recorders, however, the practical considerations of weight, electrical supply, the delicacy of such machines, etc., should be taken into account. If reasonably good equipment is available, and transportation and electricity are not a problem, the intelligently planned use of the tape machine can make the survey notably more valuable. If conditions for the use of the machine are not good, the recorder is not worth the bother.

### Comparative Analysis of Dialects

One thing which the survey must determine is how much structural difference there is between dialects. As has been stated earlier, the phonemic structure and general pattern of the grammar of at least one dialect should be known in general before the survey begins. This is not only to give focus to the survey, but also to provide a basis for comparison. Of course, differences of pronunciation are important, but they are not nearly as important as differences of phonemic structure, of the composition and arrangement of phonemes, and of the grammar. For example, if each of two dialects has a phoneme<sup>2</sup> /i/, and if that phoneme is pronounced in slightly different ways in two dialects, that fact is of far less significance than if in the one dialect there are two phonemes /i/ and /i/, and in the other only /i/. If one dialect has syllables which end with a vowel, whereas the other does not, that is also of much greater significance than a single difference in the pronunciation of the "same" phoneme. Structural differences make the problem of using the same written materials for both more difficult. Differences of pronunciation of the same structural pattern are much less significant, even though they might seem more obvious to some investigators.

### Comparing the Phonemic Systems

In making a comparison of the phonemic structures of the several dialects, it is most important to consider where they actually differ in

<sup>2</sup> On *phoneme* see Dr. Eugene A. Nida's articles in *The Bible Translator*: "What is Phonemics?" Vol. 4, No. 4, October 1953, pp. 152-156; "Practical Limitations to a Phonemic Alphabet", Vol. 5, Nos. 1, 2, January, April 1954, pp. 35-39, 58-62.

their list of phonemes. Dialect A may have /p t c k/ (/c/ here representing a palatal stop), while dialect B may have /p t k/ (with words which have /c/ in dialect A occurring largely with /t/ in dialect B). Dialect C may have /p t c k ʔ/ (with some words which occur with /k/ in A and B occurring as /k/ in C, and others as /ʔ/. At a point like this, untrained missionaries begin to feel that the whole "mess" is without rhyme or reason. No real understanding of the problems of a common orthography or separate orthographies can be reached without knowing such facts, however.

Where dialects are as closely related as ones which would be included in such a survey as this, one of the best techniques for getting the necessary information about the list of phonemes is to prepare a list of words in the language whose phonemic system is known. This list should be organized in such a way that it includes several examples of each phoneme in different positions, such as before stops, after stops, before nasals, after nasals, etc. If it is known from the preliminary survey that certain phonemes are particularly variable between dialects, there should be special investigation of them. If it is fairly certain beforehand that certain phonemes are stable throughout, or that they are uniform in certain positions, then the number of examples of those phonemes, or of those in the stable position, may be reduced. Examples for the tone or stress phonemes must be included if there are any, of course.

If this list is mimeographed, then for each new informant a new sheet may be taken, and his usage written beside the one used as a basis for comparison. In all such work, of course, the cautions mentioned earlier about handling informants and asking questions should be observed. If pictures can be used for much of the list, that is ideal.

A second very important fact about the phonemic systems which must be compared is the occurrence of phoneme clusters (consonant clusters and vowel clusters). Dialects often differ by the fact that one has more complicated clusters than the other. For example, what is /srw/ in A may be /sw/ or /sr/ or /rw/ or just /s/ in B. Sometimes there are differences only in certain positions. Clusters of consonants may occur before vowels in syllables in both dialects, but after vowels in only the one. As complete a list as possible of the vowel and consonant clusters for each should be obtained. It can often be done in much the same manner as for the phoneme inventory, but here, as with the phoneme list, a caution should be inserted. If the dialect originally selected for analysis is less complicated than some of the other dialects, then more is likely to be missed by this method than if it is more complicated than or just as complicated as the others. The preliminary investigation should show this, and care should be taken to be sure that evidence about the greater complexity of the other dialects is sought.

Syllable structure is another way in which phonemic systems vary. So are other facts about the distribution of phonemes. What phonemes can go together and what cannot? What differences are there in the phonemes which will begin a syllable and the ones which will end it? In dialect A the phonemes and phoneme clusters at the beginning of a syllable may be the same as in B, but the vowel clusters may be different,

and perhaps in A five phonemes (including /s/ and /h/) may close a syllable, whereas in B only four do so, the /s/'s in A corresponding to /h/ in B in most cases. If there are particularly difficult problems of this kind, special examples should be included in the survey sheet to find out about them. If there are only ordinary differences, then much of this information may be obtained from the rest of the data accumulated. Of course, information gained in a limited survey will not be absolutely complete. Several combinations may not happen to turn up, but usually the general outline will be clear.

### Comparing the Grammatical Systems

As an offhand observation, it would seem that important grammatical differences between closely related dialects are less likely than are phonemic ones. Important differences of syntax are less likely than those of morphology. However, especially in the morphology of languages which have complicated prefix, suffix, or suprafix systems, there can be some serious barriers to communication. In languages where morphemes consist of single phonemes (like tones which may be the morphemes for important verb aspects or even pronouns, as in Africa) there may be real difficulty, for the phoneme system may change rather easily; and when it does it may alter the grammatical contrast or force a new realignment of the phonemes which represent the morphemes. In areas like Southeast Asia, however, where there is relatively little "morphology" in most languages, such problems are quite rare.

If the preliminary survey has turned up any grammatical differences, they should be thoroughly investigated to see how widespread they are. Usually such differences are only of the kind that a particular morpheme like a "causative" or an "agentive" or a "continuative" has a different form in different dialects. In dialect A of Khmu? (in Laos, Indo-China) the negative is *ʔam*, but in dialect B it is *pə*. Occasionally, the difference may be that a particular grammatical contrast occurs in one dialect but not in the other.

Whatever the nature of the grammatical differences, some study, noting where the various forms occur, should be made. Pictures which will elicit sentences may be very useful. A "situational" approach may have to be set up to get the needed response. "What would you say if such-and-such happened?"

### Comparing the Differences Between Words

This section should not be confused with the section on differences between *sound systems*. The sound systems of two dialects might be identical, but the one would call a thumb *maʔ tiʔ* and the other *crguul*. For "town", dialect A could have *baan* and dialect B *ʔmaan*, even though both dialects have /b/ and /ʔm/ in their phonemes and phoneme clusters.<sup>3</sup> In fact, it is often the case that phonemic systems remain much the same, though dialects may no longer be mutually intelligible.

Of course, the words and phrases used to find phonemic and grammatical facts will also supply information on lexical similarities and

<sup>3</sup>The examples in this paragraph are from dialects of Khmu?.

differences. There should, however, be special investigation of some problems. Any sets of words which are known to vary systematically should be studied for the range of this variance. Perhaps some words beginning with /b/ in dialect A begin with /p/ in B, but other words have the same /b/ in both. The same set may be different in dialect C. On the other hand, there may be a different set of differences between A and C or between B and C.

There should also be an investigation of the extent of non-systematic differences. These are differences of the kind where an entirely different word may be used in one or more dialects. Such words may be borrowed or may be new formations. The borrowing patterns, if widespread, are particularly significant.

For this purpose, two kinds of word-lists are especially useful. One is a list especially developed to include words which are presumably the least subject to borrowing and change because they are so basic in almost any culture. Such a list has been developed by the noted linguist Morris Swadesh and may be obtained from the author of this article. Another kind of list would have to be made for each area. It is a list of important terms for the culture of the area, but ones which are likely to vary considerably from dialect to dialect. These include words for borrowed culture items (but ones which are pretty well known to people, like Buddhist pagodas and priests in Southeast Asia), religious life, Christian life and doctrine, if it is known in the area, and vocabulary from ordinary life which is not as basic as that of the Swadesh list.

### **Charting and Mapping Differences**

As the data is collected, or after it is in, it may be found that the problems are relatively simple and that sound decisions can be made quickly by inspection of them. Extensive charting and mapping of the data would not be necessary in such a case, unless it were needed for the reports of published findings. However, in many cases there may be difficult problems, with several conflicting factors hard to keep in mind, and some kind of systematic arrangement of the data will have to be made before it can be studied intelligently.

One kind of arrangement is to list the different difficult items in parallel columns, one column to an informant, or village, or area, or dialect type, as the case may be. There is not much use in listing all of the data obtained in one chart, but all that pertains to a particular problem. For example, if there is a wide difference in the tones which occur in syllables beginning with stops, all syllables beginning with stops should be listed and compared in their different dialects. It may be that such investigation will show patterns throughout the dialect area. Some dialects will be more alike than others.

A second very important device for studying some problems is that of mapping. This is essential when important dialect differences are associated with geographical distance. A map should be prepared, with the location of each informant indicated by a number. Important trade centers, culturally dominant areas, and natural communication routes or barriers to communication should also be indicated. These would include,



on the one hand, roads, rivers (if river travel is used), railways, etc., and, on the other hand, impassable mountain ranges (if extensive) or any other area which is not normally crossed by people.

On this map, then, the important specific dialect differences should be plotted individually. The differences plotted must be very specific. For example, if some informants have /p/ and /b/ in contrast and others do not, then a line should be drawn to separate the two. The problems may be complicated, of course, by islands of one kind of speech within the other. Other distributions can be plotted in the same way, using lines of other colors and shapes (dotted lines, dashes, dot-dash, etc.) These should be plotted as much as possible on the same map, for then the significant differences will emerge. Page 123 shows what the map might look like after five specific differences had been plotted. In this case the map indicates that the northeast and southwest areas are fairly homogeneous (but different) dialect areas, and that there is a fairly wide area of indeterminacy between, where particular communities resemble one or the other of the main areas in one respect or another.<sup>4</sup>

Such charts and maps as these do not in themselves give the answer to practical problems which the survey is organized to solve. Rather, they organize the raw data so that intelligent answers to the problems can be found.

### Testing for Mutual Intelligibility

As we mentioned under the discussion of the use of tape recorders, tests of mutual intelligibility can sometimes be made. It should be pointed out that these do not solve all the problems which the survey may need to find out. Mutual intelligibility is an extremely important factor, but it still leaves questions of what dialect or dialects to use for literature and teaching, how much consolidating can be done, the direction of cultural pressures, and other completely basic things.

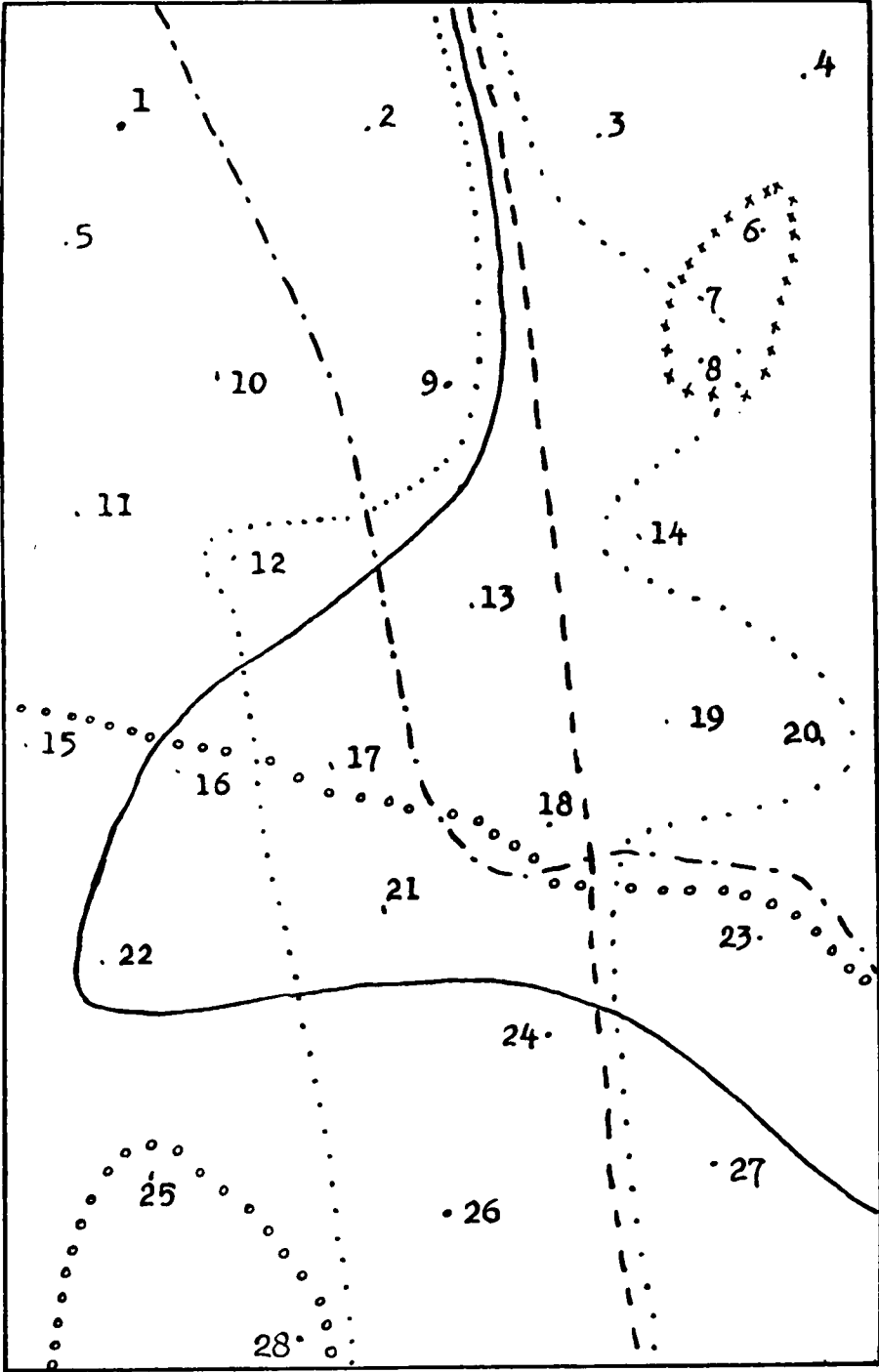
The use of recorded text for such tests is very valuable, but other approaches may be made where recordings are not available. Observation can be made as to how well guides from one area are understood in another. Informants from one or more areas may be taken on the survey specifically for finding out such information.

It is hard to standardize such tests, and the investigators should remember that the degree of intercomprehensibility may be less for an unfamiliar subject, as when the gospel is being preached and taught, than in talking about everyday matters native to the local culture.

### Assessing Cultural Factors

As has been mentioned earlier, the missionary problems in communication are such that no purely linguistic answer to a dialect problem is enough. The survey must get adequate information on important cultural factors also. If two dialect areas are strongly individualistic, taking extreme pride in their differences, and each thinking that the other speaks an inferior dialect, that is much different from a situation in which the one is looked up to by the other and speakers of one try to imitate speakers

<sup>4</sup> See Eugene A. Nida, *Bible Translating* (American Bible Society, 1947) pp. 36-40.



of the other. This is different again from the case in which there is no feeling about the matter either way.

Perhaps the speakers of one dialect are very anxious to move in the direction of one trade language (like Thai) while the speakers of the other are moving toward another trade language (like Burmese). Perhaps the speakers of one dialect will react favorably to a writing system resembling that of English, and the speakers of the other to one resembling French.

The investigators should be on the lookout for clues which will give evidence on any such cultural factors. Asking informants directly, "Do you like the way people in such-and-such area talk?" is not enough. Which people tend to be the wealthiest? Which group is the largest? Is there any collective leadership, and from where does it come? Is one group more prominent in religion? Trade? Art? Technology? War? Which has the richer folklore? Are there signs that either group is ashamed of its position? Which is nearer the centers of trade? Which had adopted the greatest degree of foreign culture?

Clues about status can often be obtained from people outside the group involved, provided they know the group. Neighbors of a different language and culture may say of an area, "The people in Valley A are more civilized than those in Valley B", or, "They make much better fighters", etc. Such informant has to be taken with caution, of course, but it may provide valuable clues.

One good way of getting information of this kind from the informants themselves is by asking indirect questions. Ask speakers of Village A whether they would rather live in B or C (not A or B). Would they rather marry a person from C or D? Who would make better medicine men. someone from D or E? etc. Such questions should be asked casually, as though the answer did not matter to you anyhow. They should be put when people are off their guard.

### **Making Practical Decisions**

Once the information has been collected, studied, and classified, practical conclusions have to be reached. The same data, however, may lead to different answers, depending on the way the question is put. In other words, different practical situations require different answers from the same data. In any case, it is not enough to ask, "Can we use the same dialect for everybody?" Rather, the problem should be approached on several levels.

There is, for example, the level of preaching and primary evangelism. Then there is the level of teaching people to read. There should be also the level of church development and education. The data may yield different answers for different levels.

To take a hypothetical case, let us suppose that we have three major dialects with some variation, as determined by the survey. The differences may be so great and mutual contact so slight that on the level of direct evangelism all three dialects should be used. Preaching should be done in all three, the one used depending on the area. Perhaps, however, A and B, although they sound quite different, have sound systems which are

very much alike, and the differences are quite systematic. By making some slight adaptations, they could use the same written materials for learning to read, for Gospel portions, etc., but C would need different materials in order to learn efficiently. (The type of adjustment which may be possible for A and B will be discussed below.)

When it comes to the translation of the whole New Testament or Bible, instituting training schools and other programs of education, etc., one of the dialects may be enough. The initial difficulties have been overcome; the problem of first contacts with the gospel and of learning to read would have been met in the local dialect. Advanced programs can often be carried on without this same differentiation.

One very important type of adjustment to dialect differences has been hinted above. Often it is highly advisable to publish all primers, books for new literates, and at least one book of the New Testament in each of the major dialects. It is far easier to learn to read if the writing represents one's mother tongue. Other literature than this, however, could be in a dialect chosen on the basis of the information resulting from the survey. Once people had learned the reading habit, they could then go on to the next step and read in a dialect different from their own. Of course, this can be done only where cultural pressures against it are not too strong. On the one hand, people may refuse to learn to read anything but the prestige dialect (or, for that matter, a foreign language they do not speak or understand), and on the other hand, they may refuse to read except in their own dialect. These factors are, of course, cultural and not linguistic, but they are all-important.

When decisions on dialect questions are first made, they should be considered tentative. There should be a carefully planned period of testing for them. First publications should be small and in small editions of a few hundred or less copies. Missionaries have a tendency to be over-ambitious in publication in many areas. A trial edition will show up the difficulties and make changes possible. The first publications cannot be made until some type of decision (even though it be an unconscious decision) on dialect is made. These publications test the decision. If they are modest, helpful changes can be incorporated at little cost, and if they are published with the express purpose of looking for the difficulties, the feelings of people responsible for them will not be hurt when the difficulties come to light.

### **Recording and Preserving Results**

Information of the type which a systematic survey will reveal is very valuable, not only to the individuals conducting it, but also to other missions, the responsible Bible society, proper government agencies, ethnographic and linguistic institutions specializing in the area, and any individual scholars who may be specialists in it as well. Presumably, reports will be made and incorporated in the mission records. These reports are, of course, adapted to what the readers can understand and use. It is, however, very important that the results be made more widely known.

Sometimes the investigator will be able to summarize the findings of the survey for publication in a journal specializing on the area. Occa-

sionally he may be able to write a full-scale article in analysis of the area. More often his finding can be mimeographed and sent to interested parties. In any case, however, the information must be shared. It is too valuable to lose.

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## “It Ought to Make Sense”

“And God walked in the garden in the wind of the day.” Of course, this sentence doesn’t make much sense in Arabic, not unless one interprets the sentence in a manner quite contrary to the intent of the Hebrew. But despite the fact that people either could not understand or could only misunderstand, the text remained for decades. Of course, the Hebrew expression, of which the Arabic is a literal rendering, does make sense, for in Hebrew ‘the wind of the day’ is ‘the cool of the day’, that period after sundown when the evening breezes refresh the land. The King James translators avoided the mistake of literalism at this point, but did not help the average reader very much with a rendering such as “gird up the loins of your mind.”

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## “Armored Tanks” or “Creeping Things”

When the Arabic Bible was being translated some years ago, the translators had to form a word to describe “creeping things” (Genesis 1:21). They employed a regular pattern of derivation and ended up with *dabbabah*. However, times have changed and other people formed derivatives from the same root, but for quite different objects. Accordingly, if you ask the average Arabic-speaking person on the streets of Cairo, Amman, Damascus, or Beirut for the meaning of *dabbabah*, without hesitation the reply will be, “armored tanks, of course.” As life changes, so does language—and now the Arabic Bible must be revised, even as scores of others are in process of the same transformations to bring them up to time.