

material. That is, the amount of effort which the audience can be expected to expend, and also the difficulties which inhibit their understanding, will determine how complex or simple the material may be and still be 'natural' for them.

Thus, the author who writes to entertain will lose his audience if he writes in a ponderous style, while the reader of a technical article can be somewhat more complex in that his readers, if they approach his work at all, are presumably not averse to a certain amount of study. And if one is writing for people with a limited education (e.g. children or new-literates), the grammar must be simpler because their limited education will inhibit their ability to grasp more complex structures in print. On the other hand, spoken speech sets up certain other barriers which are greater than in written speech; the reader can re-read sections if something is missed due to interruptions or because of the complexity of the material.

When we consider the goals involved in Bible translation for indigenous groups in the light of these observations, all indications are overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the grammar simple. The majority of these readers have only a limited education,¹ and for many more of our audience the Bible will be an oral message, read to them by others. And all too often we have an audience which, like that of the novelist, must be entertained in order to be held. If we err at all in the naturalness of the grammar in our translations, it would be safer to err on the side of simplicity rather than complexity, but without simplifying to the point of boredom. And we should be especially careful to clothe the new and difficult concepts in very normal, easy-to-follow grammatical forms, saving the complexities for passages with semantically simple content.

¹ Adults with limited education are not, of course, completely comparable to children, for whom not only lack of training but also general immaturity inhibits understanding.

PRECISION IN TRANSLATION

Some languages find it impossible to distinguish between abstract terms, such as mercy, pity and compassion. In many spheres, however, other languages use entirely different words for rice growing in the field, husked rice, rice boiled once and rice boiled twice. In English one word has to do for the lot.

Perhaps the most remarkable example of precision has come recently from the Akha translators in North Burma. The exact direction of all movement must always be specified, so much so that in translating Heb. 11: 37, 'They were sawn asunder', the question inevitably arose: 'Which way? Lengthwise or across?'