

Thorough knowledge of the biblical languages is the basis of all translation, yet their place in university curricula is being widely questioned. A recent article entitled "Some Problems of Teaching New Testament Greek", by Miss Molly Whittaker of the University of Nottingham, U.K., discusses problems of method in a refreshingly practical way. She concludes: "What I think most important, thinking always in terms of the weakest students, is to stress the great flexibility of the Koine as a tongue which in its day was living and constantly developing and the enormous interest and satisfaction to be derived from translating it intelligently into current English." For "English", one can of course read German, Gikuyu or Gujarati. Miss Whittaker's article was published in 1973 by Akademie-Verlag, Berlin in *Studia Evangelica* VI, edited by E. A. Livingstone.

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The discussion of intelligibility between languages and dialects (see our July 1973 and July 1974 issues) continues. The June 1974 issue of *Language* contains an article by Joseph E. Grimes of Cornell University and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, entitled "Dialects as Optimal Communication Networks". Readers of Dr. Grimes' report *The Thread of Discourse* (National Science Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1972) will appreciate his ability to communicate essentially technical material as simply as possible. In the present article, he notes three characteristics of intelligibility tests between dialects. First, they are typically asymmetric: "If Town A understands Town B well, that is no guarantee that Town B understands Town A, especially if Town B is a cultural or economic center visited by people from A . . . Secondly, "intelligibility is calibrated with reference to different threshold levels for different purposes of communication. E.g., materials for beginning readers need to be close enough to their local form of speech so that dialect differences do not impede their progress . . . Experience has shown that the number of different primers written for an area is usually greater than, say, the number of translations of portions of the Bible, because of the difference in the threshold of acceptability." Those preparing new reader selections will need to take this principle increasingly into account. Thirdly, intelligibility tests are always incomplete: it is not practical to test intelligibility at every village in an area with reference to every other village. Dr. Grimes applies a simplified form of the Hitchcock-Koopmans model of transport with fixed costs to data on twelve Mexican dialects, producing computerised maps in which "contour lines encircle speech communities that form an optimal network at the threshold level represented by the lines".

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