Contents

Abstract

1. Survey background
2. History of the Sipakapa language project
   2.1 Linguistic assessment
   2.2 Sociolinguistic assessments
3. Survey design
   3.1 Sociolinguistic focus
   3.2 Preparation
   3.3 Targeted sample
   3.4 Procedure
4. Survey results and analysis of interview sample
   4.1 Vernacular vitality and language attitudes
      4.1.1 Towns in sample
      4.1.2 Age and gender of sample
      4.1.3 Religious background of sample
   4.2 Literature comprehension and vernacular literature use attitudes
5. Conclusions and final observations
   5.1 Vernacular use remains vibrant
   5.2 Positive attitudes toward vernacular use
   5.3 Final Observations

Appendix A: Sipacapa interview form
Appendix B: Vernacular language use according to aldea (town)
Appendix C: Comments from sample regarding vernacular vitality and attitudes
Abstract
This sociolinguistic survey took place in Guatemala. The purpose was to describe Sipakapense language use and attitudes as an objective standard with which to assess vitality and translation need viability in Sipacapa. An interview was held with eighty individuals from various locations where a recording was played of portions of literature in both the vernacular and Spanish for comparing comprehension. The survey took into account various factors such as age, gender, and religious persuasion.

1. Survey background
The Central America Branch (CAB) of SIL International has extensive investment in the Sipakapa language program with more than a 20-year involvement in it. Paul and Susan Hoiland began a translation project. When they had to leave the project, further assessment regarding the need for a continued translation project was recommended.

The Americas Group conducted this survey with the direct and invaluable assistance of Ed Beach and the full cooperation of Paul and Sue Hoiland, along with the CAB administration. The survey instrument assumes as a basis for its interview questions some of the tests outlined in the CAB “Vernacular Language Program Assessment Criteria,” as well as those implicit in the Americas Group’s “Language Project Potential: Decision Making Guidelines.” This analysis of the results attempts to describe Sipakapense language use and attitudes as an objective standard against which to assess vitality and translation need viability in Sipacapa.

2. History of the Sipakapa language project
2.1 Linguistic assessment
Linguistic need for Sipakapa literature was determined by Paul Townsend in the 1970s. Sipakapa is the most distinct of the Quichean languages. It is completely surrounded by Mamean languages. Paul Hoiland described it as “Conservative; [a] more archaic form of Quiché.”

2.2 Sociolinguistic assessments
In 1982, Paul Hoiland calculated that the “Total population [was] 6,000 to 7,000. (Of these, perhaps 1,000 speak Spanish in the whole municipality.)” The percentage of vernacular language use in the aldeas ‘towns’ of the Municipality of Sipacapa was as follows:

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1 September 5, 1990. The “…Program Assessment Criteria” was “intended to be applied to speech communities in which CAB has not had nor presently has a language program.” Nevertheless, the criteria provided helpful guidelines upon which to frame questions for the interview.
2 Sipakapa is the Mayan Academy spelling of the Hispanic Sipacapa (as in the Municipality of Sipacapa). Sipakapense refers to either the language or the people of Sipacapa.
3 Ed Beach, personal communication.
5 Hoiland, Paul, “Profile of Community Resources,” 1982. ms.
a. three towns @ 10–20 percent (Sipacapa, Quequesiguan, Pie de la Cuesta)
b. two towns @ 50 percent (Poj and Pueblo Viejo)
c. seven towns @ “the great majority...speak Sipacapense,” with “nearly 100 percent” in Tres Cruces.

In 1986, Hoiland reported essentially the same population figures and percentage of vernacular usage as in 1982. The use of the vernacular continued “alive & well.” Another sign of vernacular vitality was that he reported bilingualism to be “very low.” In terms of attitude for the highlands, there was only “mild inferiority regarding the language.”

3. Survey design
Upon the Hoilands’ departure in 1998, the CAB sought resolution for the Sipakapa Project. Ed Beach, linguist for a nearby Mamean language, continued promoting the Sipakapense literature already in print. With some impetus from Beach and the Central America Mission, community leaders in the Municipality of Sipacapa aligned to form a training institute. Motivation on the part of the Sipakapenses to attend the institute was high. With seeming spontaneity, the numbers of participants jumped from 30+ to more than 80. Beach used some translated scriptures in the institute and immediately noted a new and marked interest in the Sipakapense primer and other literature. Based upon several visits to Sipacapa, Beach reported that attitudes toward both the vernacular and literature use were favorable among many of them and that vernacular language use appeared to be strong.

It became obvious that another vitality and viability assessment was needed: vernacular language maintenance issues were under question. Of particular interest was the attitude of the religious community toward vernacular use, and especially toward the use of the vernacular literature.

3.1. Sociolinguistic focus
For this survey, I assumed that dialect intelligibility testing was not necessary. Through competent testing, that decision had already been made and language work had already begun. As a result, the interview for this survey was designed to test sociolinguistic criteria, primarily vernacular language vitality and attitudes, along with literature use feasibility.

3.2. Preparation
I prepared a survey instrument (see appendix A) with the consultation input of Dave Holbrook. The primary language assistant, a pastor, who had previously learned to read the vernacular, translated the interview text from Spanish into Sipakapense in Guatemala

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6 “Sketch,” 1986: “10–20 percent use in lowland aldeas; 70–80 percent percent use in highland aldeas...”

### 3.3. Targeted sample

We intended to test selectively in the survey. From previous information, we believed that people at the lower altitudes, particularly of those in *aldeas* close to the municipal capital, Sipacapa, were more heavily influenced by Spanish than those in the higher altitudes. We targeted 80 subjects who lived primarily in the *aldeas* at the higher altitudes, where we knew the vernacular was more widely spoken. A minimal prerequisite of the interview candidates was that they understand the vernacular.

The survey also attempted to sample, with some degree of equality, four age categories and both genders.

Another objective was to select respondents based on their different religious persuasions, i.e., evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and the nonchurched.

Finally, in order to better sample the communities in the higher altitudes, as well as some in the lower altitudes, we planned to interview respondents from as many towns (*aldeas*) and villages (*caserios*) as possible.

### 3.4. Procedure

Ed Beach and I teamed up with the two language assistants, a pastor, and a community leader. We conducted the interviews primarily in Sipakapense. The questions were read and explained in the vernacular. The respondents chose whether to answer in Spanish or in the vernacular.

The recording of most of the interview answers was objective. Out of 43 questions, the interviewee gave 39 one-word answers; for two questions, he explained why he had given the previous answer; and in response to the vocal recordings of the Luke 4 passages for the comprehension test, the respondent summarized what he had understood.

Targeting as many *aldeas* as possible within the time frame available, we followed the lead of the local language assistants, who introduced us to their friends, associates, or extended family members. On several occasions, we interviewed vernacular speakers whom they did not know. Following each interview, the respondent received a copy of Sipakapense Luke on cassette in gratitude for their participation.

### 4. Survey results and analysis of interview sample

In this analysis, we analyzed the survey results and demonstrated vernacular language vitality and Literature Use viability based on the vernacular language maintenance and positive attitudes that the Sipakapenses have with respect to the vernacular (appendix C lists specific comments made by the respondents that illustrate these generalizations).

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7 *Caserios* are indicated by a “C.” preceding the name, both in the chart in table 1, as well as on the map (appendix B).
4.1. Vernacular vitality and language attitudes

The 80 interviews we gathered represent a cross-section of society, from the well-educated and traditional leaders (a professor, a former mayor, three community-designated authorities, pastors, store, and restaurant owners) to monolingual farmers and illiterate laborers. We surveyed aldeas in the higher and lower altitudes, included respondents for whom Sipakapense was a second language, and interviewed many non-evangelicals. The results of this wider sampling proved to be fortuitous, altering some preconceived notions and reinforcing findings, which, without the wider input, would have been less conclusive due to their selectivity.

In the following sections, we first examine the samples according to aldeas, age and gender, and religious background. Next, we examine literature comprehension and respondent attitudes toward vernacular literature use.

4.1.1. Towns in sample

The Municipality of Sipacapa has a present-day population of more than 12,000, an estimated 8,000 of which maintain the use of the vernacular (compare with the 6,000–7,000 estimated in 1982 and 1986). A former municipal official estimated language use percentages according to town, that demonstrate a high percentage of vernacular language maintenance (see maps in appendix B and table 1).

Percentages of vernacular language use was high in both 1982 and 1986 (see 2.2.). The findings of this survey indicate that vernacular language use remains vibrant today.

The respondents represent 13 out of 15 of the vernacular-speaking towns in the Municipality of Sipacapa, with 24/80 (30 percent) representing the lower altitude towns and 56/80 being higher altitude ones. Table 1 shows which towns are represented in the interviews, the number of respondents representing each, high and low altitudes, and an estimation of vernacular use in each of them.

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8 See map, appendix B. The map was developed by the Municipality of Sipacapa. The data showing the percentage of language use was provided by local residents. The shaded area of the map indicates aldeas (towns) that are sparsely populated and that are predominantly Spanish speaking.

9 Taken from the calculations on the map (see footnote 11).
Table 1. Sample distribution according to *aldeas* and % vernacular usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highland Aldeas</th>
<th>% of Vernacular Use</th>
<th># of Respondents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cancil</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Chilil (Escupijá)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chual</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escupijá</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Estancia</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poj</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pueblo Viejo</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quecá</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Setivá (San Isidro)</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tres Cruces</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Low Altitude Aldeas

| Llano Grande                          | 35                  | 3                |       |
| Pie de la Cuesta                      | 40                  | 1                |       |
| C. Saquimblaj (Sipacapa)              | 35                  | 8                |       |
| Sipacapa                             | 35                  | 1                |       |
| Xeabaj                               | 50                  | 11               |       |
| **Total**                            |                     | **24**           |       |

4.1.2. Age and gender of sample

The four age categories of the respondents were from 13 to 20 years of age, from 21 to 35, from 36 to 50, and from 51 and older. The following table diagrams the age and number of males and females (45 and 35), as well as the percentage of respondents in each age category.

Table 2. Age/gender comparisons of Sipakapense respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13–20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10 = 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24 = 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>27 = 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19 = 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>80 = 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those interviewed, several were monolingual vernacular speakers (at least one from the 21–35 year category, two from the 36–50 year category, and three among the oldest group). From all four age groups, 89 percent claimed the vernacular as their mother tongue.10 Comparing Spanish and Sipakapense, 94 percent said they preferred hearing Sipakapense spoken,11 and 78 percent said they speak the vernacular best.12 Most did

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10 Appendix A, question 3.
11 Appendix A, question 24.
not learn to speak Spanish until they began attending school, including those of the youngest age category. All of those sampled said that they considered the vernacular important to be able to speak. The following table portrays what each age group of respondents said about themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>% Vernac. mother tongue</th>
<th>Avg. age learned Spanish</th>
<th>% Prefer hearing Vernac.</th>
<th>% Speak Vernac. best</th>
<th>Vernac. is imp. to speak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13–20</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>9 yrs old</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–35</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>10 yrs old</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–50</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>11 yrs old</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>14 yrs old</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11 yrs old</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to respondents about others in their *aldea*, middle-aged adults speak mostly in the vernacular (89 percent) or equally with Spanish (10 percent). The elderly maintain primary use of the vernacular (99 percent); many interviewees knew of a number of people who were strictly monolingual in the vernacular.

Respondents' opinions about language use by adolescents and children was more difficult to quantify, since many of the youth commonly use both the vernacular and Spanish. According to the respondents, 26 percent of the children speak primarily the vernacular, 45 percent speak primarily Spanish and 29 percent speak both languages equally. For the adolescents, 19 percent of the teens speak primarily the vernacular, 46 percent speak primarily Spanish, and 38 percent speak both languages equally.

When asked which language the respondent thought children should learn first, 59 percent answered that children should learn the vernacular prior to, or concurrent with Spanish; 30 percent desired that their children learn Spanish first (though many also desired that they learn Sipakapense). Many who were single (11 percent) did not respond.

Although each generation uses the vernacular less and Spanish more, language learning in the great majority of Sipakapense homes remains in the vernacular.

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12 Appendix A, question 17.
13 Appendix A, question 4.
14 Appendix A, question 29.
15 Appendix A, question 22.
16 Appendix A, question 23.
17 Appendix A, question 32.
18 Appendix A, questions 20 and 21.
19 Appendix A, question 28.
4.1.3. Religious background of sample
The sampling of respondents demonstrated that regardless of whether the respondent was an evangelical, Roman Catholic, or nonchurched, they agreed with respect to vernacular language attitudes.

4.2. Literature comprehension and vernacular literature use attitudes
A final segment of the interview was to orient the respondents regarding literacy/literature available in the vernacular and literature use possibilities. The interviewer showed Sipakapense literature samples to inform the respondents that Sipakapense is a written language and that quality literature is, in fact, accessible to them. The interviewer also played recordings of two similar passages, one in the vernacular and one in Spanish, and asked for a summary of what the respondents heard, then asked their opinions regarding those and alternative usage of literature in the vernacular.

There was consensus among the different participants regarding comprehension of the passage on cassette and interest in the use of the vernacular literature in any possible medium. When asked if they understood the passage better in Spanish or in Sipakapense, many would not choose between the two, but answered, “both.” Following are the percentages of respondent answers to questions 38 and 39 of the interview (see appendix A):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sipakapense</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Both equally</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understood better</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed more</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The altitude of the aldea seems to be the most clearly defining factor in terms of comprehension and preference of the literature reading. Five percent out of the six percent who rated their understanding of the Spanish better than the vernacular are from the lowland aldeas Xeabaj and Sipacapa.

The final questions addressed the potential use of the vernacular in religious contexts. There was assent expressed for this by all, with fourteen showing much interest. Two individuals stated the following: “I hope you’ll send us some cassettes soon”; regarding the option of the vernacular literature presented by radio, they remarked, “Sipakapa is clearer; Spanish goes by so fast, it gets all mixed up.”

5. Conclusions and final observations
5.1. Vernacular use remains vibrant
Vernacular use near Sipacapa appears more dynamic than we suspected. According to our language associates, 35 percent of the population continues to use Sipakapense in the aldea of Sipacapa and Pie de la Cuesta (compared with the estimated 10–15 percent in 1982 and 1986).

Monolingual Sipakapenses live a two-minute walk from the town of Sipacapa. Fully bilingual adult Sipakapenses use the vernacular in their homes at the outskirts of the
town of Sipacapa. Meanwhile, in the same lower altitude _aldeas_, the average child and adolescent seems to have passive use of the vernacular; they understand it from use in the home, but speak mostly Spanish. Parents’ expectations of them is that they speak in Spanish. In higher altitude _aldeas_, most children and adolescents, as well as adults, maintain and seem to prefer the use of the vernacular. Average vernacular use in these higher _aldeas_ is 80 percent.

The Municipality of Sipacapa is surrounded by Mam communities, an ethnic group who is invading the land. Nevertheless, there is evidence that some of the Mam in the upper altitude _aldeas_ are learning the Sipacapense language out of necessity. The Mayan Academy and others seem to be raising peoples’ awareness of the threat of potential loss of self-identity caused by the Mam who have encroached in the territory. Although in many situations, the vernacular gives place to Spanish; in other cases, visitors have learned the language of the hosts.

5.2. Positive attitudes toward vernacular use

Over the past few years, some significant trend reversals toward a more positive attitude appear to be taking place regarding vernacular language maintenance. The Mayan Academy seems to be successfully promoting the use of the Sipakapense language and culture. Once a failure in terms of bilingual education, it is now effectively teaching youth and adults reading and writing in Sipakapense. Vernacular literacy courses are offered in eleven public schools and at twelve alternate sites. The teaching of vernacular reading and writing is increasing and seems to be gaining momentum.

At the same time, literature published through the efforts of the Hoilands is now accessible, and church attendees (as well as the general populace) are demonstrating new interest in those resources. They are catalysts of an apparent resurgence of self-respect in terms of the value of the language and culture.

There is clearly a strong sense of identity with, and ownership of, the vernacular language. As was previously pointed out, 100 percent of the respondents feel it is important to be able to speak the vernacular, and 91 percent declared that they prefer hearing the vernacular spoken, with an additional five percent equivocating between Spanish and Sipakapense.

Sipakapenses speak the vernacular with others who understand it in any domain, as long as no one is present who would not understand. In that case, Spanish is spoken.

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20 See appendix C, 2e.
21 See table 1.
22 See appendix C, 2f and 2g.
23 See appendix C, 1.b.
24 Personal communication, Delfino Tema.
25 Personal communication, Delfino Tema: “After some false starts, over a period of the past eight years, 300–400 students have graduated from a literacy course in Sipakapense.”
The wisdom of the Hoilands' decision to use the official Mayan orthography is apparent. The Academy has translated Hoilands' grammar and plans to publish it this year. The President of the Academy, Delfino Tema, has shown clear respect for their work.

Almost everyone expressed great interest in the Sipakapense publications, particularly in the alphabet book and primer. Sixty-six books were recently sold. Those unable to buy at that time ordered some from Ed Beach. Each respondent was grateful to receive a copy of Sipakapense Luke portions on cassette. There was also 100 percent interest in listening to radio broadcasts in Sipakapense.

Children in the highland aldeas continue to learn the vernacular as their first language; in the low altitudes, many Sipakapense children who do not speak the vernacular remain passive bilinguals because the vernacular is spoken by many of the adults in the home.

Having interviewed men and women, boys and girls, churched and nonchurched, we observed a high regard for the vernacular by all ages, genders, and religious persuasions.

In fact, we found concurrence among all those surveyed regardless of their religious affiliation, the aldea in which they lived, their gender difference, or their individual social status.

5.3 Final Observations

- At this point, there is no commitment on the part of any Sipakapense entity to initiate a language development project. However, there is widespread interest to maintain vernacular use and good potential for commitment on the part of some residents.
- A local infrastructure is in place that could host a project: The institute started by the Hoilands.
- A trained facilitator would be needed who could relate to all segments of the language community as well as with the Mayan Academy. This person would have to earn the trust and respect of each of the above entities through regular face-to-face contact.²⁶
- A community committee could be formed, based upon the leadership abilities observed among the Sipakapenses.
- Literacy teaching is already in place through the Mayan Academy.
- A representative group of the community should be brought into a potential language project.

²⁶ Relationships are extremely important for the success of a potential language project with the Sipakapenses. The ease with which we were able to conduct this survey was due to the relationships that had previously been established. 1) The pastor was an excellent contact person. He was not only a good public relations person, was respected by all and able to cross denominational boundaries. 2) Our relationship with the Hoilands, fellow colleagues, was a plus. Many people knew the Hoilands and accepted us quickly when they learned that we were associates (especially, the President of the Mayan Academy in Sipacapa). 3) Ed Beach had previously established good relationships through the Bible Institute. That gave us validity.
• Sipakapense shares much with its Quichean relatives. In later tests, adaptation of the Quichean (West Central) literature adaptation appears to be unfeasible (Beach, personal communication).

• Should any Sipacapa translation project be reinitiated, one key to its acceptance will be to maintain trust relationships with the right individuals.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{27} Katy Barnwell’s article, “When to recommend independent Mother-tongue translator programs,” gives pointedly appropriate recommendations for consideration (in Bergman, T. G., \textit{Survey Reference Manual}, SIL, 1990, 1.5.1–1.5.7).
Appendix A: Sipacapa interview form

Date
Name of population center
Name of respondent
Gender
Age
Where else have you lived?
For how long?
Do you attend church?
What is the name of your church?
Where is your church located?

Language Vitality:
1. What language did your mother speak in the home?
2. What language did your father speak in the home?
3. Which language did you learn first?
4. At what age did you learn your second language?
5. Which other language do you speak?
6. Which L do you mostly speak with the elderly?
7. Which L do you speak with your wife?
8. Which L do you speak with your friends?
9. Which L do you speak with your children?
10. Which L do you speak to express something intimate?
11. Which L do you speak while eating a meal with your family?
12. Which L do you mostly speak while in the countryside?
13. Which L do you mostly speak while in the plaza?
14. Which L do you mostly speak while in church?
15. In which L do you pray while alone?

Language Attitudes:
16. In which L do people prefer to hear a story told?
17. Which L do you speak best?
18. Which L do you understand best?
19. Which L does your family (=children) speak best?
20. In your aldea, which L do the children speak best?
21. In your aldea, which L do the young people speak best?
22. In your aldea, which L do the middle-aged speak best?
23. In your aldea, which L do the elderly speak best?
24. Which language do you prefer to hear?
25. Why?
26. When there are two Ls used in the home, which is used more?
27. When there is a change from a public speech or preaching to the use of Sipakapense, what is the reaction of the people?
28. Which language do you think children should learn first?
29. In your opinion, is it important to be able to speak in Sipakapense?
   a) Yes    b) No
30. Why?
31. Which L is spoken during a funeral service in your aldea?
32. Do you know of anyone who speaks only Sipakapense (no Spanish)?
   a) Yes (How many?)    b) No
Sipakapense Literature Attitudes:
(Demonstrate Sipakapense literature samples.)
33. Did you know that there are books written in the Sipakapense language?
   a) Yes         b) No
34. Do you know anyone who owns Sipakapense books?
   a) Yes         b) No
35. Do you like the idea of having literature in Sipakapense?
   a) Yes         b) No

Scripture Comprehension in Sipakapense:
36. Tell me what you understood of this passage.
   a) Repeated back accurately and in detail.
   b) Seemed to understand well, but could not repeat back well.
   c) Seemed to understand, but repeated back with some mistakes (imprecise communication ability?).
   d) Did not seem to understand well; was unable to repeat back.

Scripture Comprehension in Spanish:
37. Tell me what you understood of this passage.
   a) Repeated back accurately and in detail.
   b) Seemed to understand well, but could not repeat back well.
   c) Seemed to understand, but repeated back with some mistakes (imprecise communication ability?).
   d) Did not seem to understand well; was unable to repeat back.

Comparative Scripture Comprehension—Sipakapense versus Spanish:
38. Did you understand better what you just heard in Sipakapense or in Spanish?
   a) Sipakapense   b) Spanish
39. Did you enjoy listening more to the Sipakapense or to the Spanish?
   a) Sipakapense   b) Spanish

Sipakapense Literacy Attitudes:
40. If you had the chance to learn to read and write in Sipakapense, would you like to learn?
   a) Yes         b) No
Appendix B: Vernacular language use according to aldea (town)
Appendix C: Comments from sample regarding vernacular vitality and attitudes

1. Vernacular language vitality

a. Macario, a 41-year-old man, whose parents were equally proficient in Sipakapense and Spanish, and who claimed to grow up bilingual, when asked in which language he prayed when he was alone, said, “Both, but it is easier to pray in the vernacular.”

b. Haroldo, a 16-year-old Catholic boy from Tres Cruces, spoke naturally with his father (a one-time mayor of the Municipality of Sipacapa) and us in Sipakapense, “I always speak with all of my friends in Sipakapense… with everybody who understands the vernacular… we all understand our language… In all of Guatemala, there is only one Sipakapense. The Mam surround us. We don’t want to lose our own language. We aren’t Quiché, we aren’t Cakchiquel; we are Sipakapenses.” The Mayan Academy has several institutes (high school programs) where young people study in Sipakapense. Haroldo is enrolled at one of these institutes in Tres Cruces. Another advanced course of study held in Tres Cruces is a computer course, taught completely in Sipakapense.

c. Aurelio, a 28-year-old whose L1 is Sipakapense, learned Spanish when eight. He lived a year in Guatemala City and six years in the U.S. Although married to a dominantly Spanish speaker with whom he talks in Spanish to express something intimate, he prefers Sipakapense. He speaks Sipakapense with other Sipakapenses, either in the town square, or in the fields. He thinks his children should learn Sipakapense as their L1. His wife said, “First Spanish, and then Sipakapense.”

d. Fifty-nine-year-old Nemecio was once the mayor of Sipacapa. He is fully bilingual, but always speaks with his children in Sipakapense, even when he talks to some of them by phone in the U.S. He commented, “The people prefer Sipakapense to Spanish. They say, ‘We want you to speak in our language! We aren’t ‘ladinos’!’. They repudiate those who speak in Spanish.” He knows many monolingual Sipakapense speakers.

e. Máximo is a Catholic in Tres Cruces. He commented that the RC catechists in the towns and countrysides use only the vernacular and they also teach using the vernacular in the church.

f. Doroteo, a 43-year-old native of the town of Sipacapa, is an L1 speaker of Sipakapense. He learned Spanish when he began school at age 12. He still understands Sipakapense better than Spanish.

g. Antonia, a 13-year-old native speaker of Sipakapense, learned Spanish at the age of six when she began school. Although she said she understands Spanish better than Sipakapense, later in the interview, she said that she understood and liked the Sipakapense recording of Luke better than the Spanish recording. She knows many monolingual Sipakapense speakers. Her 10-year-old brother spoke Sipakapense with his siblings.

h. Twenty-five-year-old Antonia from Setivá attends a church where the bilingual pastor preaches exclusively in Spanish. She is a very monolingual Sipakapense. After the first verse of the Spanish recording of Luke, she could not understand anything. When she is alone, she prays only in Sipakapense.
2. Vernacular language attitudes

a. Forty-eight-year-old Maria is very monolingual in the vernacular. She lives in Tres Cruces and says that the Mames who have moved to Sipacapa land are learning Sipakapense. When she listened to the Luke 4 passage in the vernacular, she described in great detail what she had heard, in an animated way. Neither she nor her son paid attention as well when they listened to the recording in Spanish compared to the recording in Sipakapense.

b. Santos is one of twenty-seven bilingual education teachers in the Municipality. He can read in Sipakapense. His opinion is that children should learn Sipakapense first, “because they’ll learn Spanish anyway (in school).”

c. When I ate in a Sipacapa restaurant and the Sipakapense owner learned of my interest in the vernacular, she gave me a free meal.

d. Domingo, from Quecá says, “Here, we’ll never lose our language because someone from here went to the coast to work and lived there for forty-five years. When he returned, he still spoke Sipakapense.” Domingo also said, “Those people who speak just Spanish do it out of pure pride” (pride is a major sin in Mayan culture).

e. Bernarda, a 43-year-old who lives just minutes’ walk from the town of Sipacapa, talks to her children in Sipakapense; they answer in Spanish. She speaks in Sipakapense to others in her church (in the town of Sipacapa), people who are vernacular speakers. Listening to the Luke 4 passage in Spanish, she made comments in Sipakapense. Her 16-year-old daughter read Sipakapense Genesis out loud with some fluency—and interest.

f. Carmelina, a 26-year-old Mam, moved from Mam territory to Pueblo Viejo when she was two. She began learning Sipakapense when she was three though her parents spoke only Mam and Spanish. She now is trilingual and speaks Sipakapense with her friends and Spanish with her children. Of the three, she prefers Sipakapense.

g. Another 22-year-old Mam woman married a Sipakapense community official from Poj three months ago. She is learning Sipakapense and can now speak it some.