



DIALECT INTELLIGIBILITY TESTING



by
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PREFACE

Studies of interdialectal intelligibility have attracted considerable attention since they were first suggested by Voegelin and Harris in 1951. Although these authors seemed to suggest the method primarily as a kind of dialect geography, it has been used mainly to measure dialect distance. In 1959 Hans Wolff questioned the validity of using a measure of intelligibility to determine genetic relationships among languages. He pointed out that intelligibility more appropriately signals societal relationships. On the strength of Wolff's arguments, John Crawford adapted the method for the dialect survey program of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Mexico. Preliminary studies were carried out in 1964. Since then, we have applied the method widely and have made many improvements in data collection techniques.

This monograph makes available the methods we use for collecting intelligibility data, the ways in which we treat and interpret these data, and the rationale for the methodology. We hope that these materials will be useful for researchers outside of the circle of SIL as well as to SIL colleagues, many of whom are just beginning their own dialect survey programs.

I have tried to be comprehensive, partly because the subject is complex, and partly to provide something of interest for a broad spectrum of readers. As a result the monograph is something of a conglomerate. However, the chapter divisions provide handy starting and stopping points. To some extent I have tried to keep discussions of techniques separate from those about theoretical issues. Thus the reader who is not interested in theory can avoid most of it by not reading certain chapters. Likewise, the theoretically inclined can generally skip over the sections on techniques. However, although theory and technique are analytically distinct, they are not separate in practice. Some mixture of the two was unavoidable.

The discussions touch on several important but undeveloped topics. For example, what to do with sociological data once it is collected. I hope that this will stimulate the reader to do some of his own independent research. To answer the basic questions that remain will require much more than a one-man effort.

This monograph itself has not been a one-man effort. The main impetus came from a conference of field workers held in Cuernavaca, Morelos, in April 1967, headed up by John Crawford. Those attending were C. Henry Bradley, Eugene Casad, Joseph E. Grimes, Conrad Hurd, Richard Hyde, Paul Kirk, Peter Landerman, Paul Mellema, Laurie McIntosh, Leo Skinner, Ronald Stoltzfus, and Morris Stubblefield. Paul Wright, of the University of North Dakota, graciously served as consultant to the conference. In addition to Crawford's introductory lecture (summarized briefly in Section 3.3) and individual reports on the Mixe, Mixtec, Chol, Mazatec, Chinantec, and Zapotec surveys, the conference considered questions of data processing, the collection of ethnographic data, informant techniques, recording techniques, reliability, and validity. Thus the topics discussed by the conference provided a principal source for the ideas and content of this monograph.

I am indebted to many of my colleagues for their encouragement and help. Henry Bradley, Sarah Gudschinsky, Bruce and Barbara Hollenbach, and Ronald Stoltzfus all read earlier drafts of the manuscript and made suggestions, many of which I have adopted. Peter Landerman, Mildred Larson, Larry Lyman, Paul Mellema, David Persons, and Stoltzfus have all stimulated my thinking in our too infrequent discussions. In addition, Stoltzfus gave me free access to the manuscripts in the survey files, including some of his own. Bradley allowed me to use his unpublished paper on the Mixtec study. Bruce Hollenbach also made some helpful suggestions about Appendix J. Lawrence Clark was kind enough to permit me to include a summary of his pre-publication version of a paper about Popoluca language shift. Allan Jamieson, Paul Kirk, and Eunice Pike all read and commented on the appendix about Mazatec vowel shifts (Appendix G).

I am grateful to my director, Frank Robbins, for his kindness in letting me operate at my own pace, unhindered by other responsibilities, during eighteen months of research, writing, and revision to bring this manuscript to completion.

My extreme gratitude goes to Joseph E. Grimes for his hard-nosed, thorough critique of a late draft of the entire manuscript. He corrected many of my erroneous statements and cleared up some incoherent arguments as well as opening my eyes to some questions I have not yet answered. The monograph is very much the better for Grimes's capable and kind supervision.

Needless to say, none of my colleagues agrees with everything I say. I assume full responsibility for whatever faults and mistakes the manuscript contains. The major fault may have been the attempt to apply my scant knowledge of statistics to a very complicated problem. My only claim is that I have tried to do my homework well and avoid novel interpretations.

Finally, I am very grateful to my wife, Betty, who has kindly typed the entire manuscript at least three times through (and some sections more often than that) as a result of seemingly countless revisions. She also managed to endure my grumpiness as I tried to think through many difficult sections of the monograph. Finally, she has on numerous occasions corrected my unorthodox grammar.

Eugene H. Casad

-Mexico, D. F.
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