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# **Windows on Bilingualism**

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## On Making Decisions about Language Projects

Calvin R. Rensch

More than a decade ago SIL began to consider a set of 'Faith Goals for the '80s.' These dealt with aspects of the work in which progress was crucial if the work of the organization was to move forward. There were no ready solutions or programs. We agreed to call upon God's help in a united way as well as to take new initiative ourselves in these areas.

One of these areas of concern dealt with survey and the identification of those languages that yet need Bible translation.<sup>1</sup> During the decade, substantial progress has been made in the number of languages surveyed, the number of workers involved in survey activities—many of them full-time survey workers—and the refinement of techniques for gathering information relevant to decisions about new language projects.

Toward the end of the decade, about a year ago, scores of survey specialists and administrators from every part of the SIL world met at Horsleys Green to share experience in language assessment, expound new survey techniques, and set directions for new research. During the conference a statement on language assessment criteria was discussed and adopted by the participants. That statement was later edited and approved by the area directors and vice presidents and has been placed in circulation

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<sup>1</sup>References in this paper to "language projects" are intended to refer to projects in which Bible translation activities are included as a prominent part of the project. This more inclusive term is used to indicate the wide range of activities typically included in projects undertaken by the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

provisionally by the Board Committee on Academic Affairs with the expectation that there will be ongoing opportunity for discussion of these issues.

A large part of the presentations and discussion at the Language Assessment Conference dealt with issues of bilingualism, patterns of language use in multilingual communities, and language attitudes. This emphasis reflects the fact that the range of data being collected and interpreted by survey specialists and administrators extends beyond issues of linguistic similarity and dialect intelligibility.

When my wife, Carolyn, and I began to work with the Chinantec people in Mexico, language use there was quite straightforward. Spanish was used in the local school (principally by the teacher) for making purchases from a few resident and itinerant merchants (although most of the itinerant merchants had learned Chinantec), and in occasional contacts with officials above the village level. Other than that, the Chinantec language was the unchallenged vehicle of communication in the dozens of Chinantec hamlets.

On one occasion our supervisor came to visit us in the village and was introduced to the elected leader of the village, who had just returned from a trip to the central town of the district. Our supervisor asked the village leader in Spanish, "How was your trip to Choapan?" To this the village leader replied, "Yes," not understanding even that simple question. The level of proficiency in Spanish for most adults at that time was obviously quite low. Not surprisingly, the Chinantec people believed that their own language was the finest one for nearly all purposes. Therefore, when the branch conducted a survey among the various groups of Chinantec people, the nearly exclusive focus of that survey was to map out the network of mutually unintelligible Chinantec languages.

The situation in which many survey specialists are working today is quite different from that. Frequently encountered complicating factors include the following:

1. More than one vernacular (local, ethnic) language is spoken in a single community;
2. Multiple varieties of vernacular languages, associated with different castes or other social groups, are encountered;
3. More than one major language (language of wider communication) is used in the area—one for education and others for government, business or religion(s);
4. Both a major language and the vernacular are used in the home, depending on the topic of conversation or the combination of family members involved in the conversation;
5. The local dialect of the major language is so different from the standard dialect of that language as to be essentially unintelligible

with it, but the standard and nonstandard dialects are called by the same name and little recognition is given to this difference;

6. Reading and writing are firmly established in connection with a language other than the vernacular; sometimes the only language considered suitable for writing is not one's mother tongue but is acquired only through education;
7. Attitudes of the people are rather negative toward the language they understand best or language loyalty may be divided among the various languages of the community.

In some areas even the concept of mother tongue becomes muddy. In Singapore, for example, the language reported as mother tongue often is the language associated with the clan of one's father, whether or not the child has ever learned a word of that language—and frequently he has not. In some communities in northwestern South America the mother's language regularly is not the language of the father nor of most households of the community. Perhaps even more perplexing are those situations of rapid language shift, frequently encountered in urban India and Singapore, in which young people adopt a new language for use in their own families and in the community, restricting use of their own mother tongue to communication with members of their parents' generation, with resultant reduction of their mother tongue both in level of proficiency and in domains of usage.

With this array of complex factors facing both survey specialist and administrator, it is not surprising that both appreciated the opportunity afforded by the conference to discuss these factors.<sup>2</sup>

### **Relevant factors for selecting language projects**

Increasingly, in various parts of the world a range of factors are being considered when decisions are made concerning language projects. These factors often include the following:

1. **Dialect intelligibility:** intelligibility among linguistically related varieties of a language.
2. **Bilingualism:** proficiency of speakers of vernacular languages in a second language or in a distinct standard dialect.

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<sup>2</sup>In some contexts each language identified as being clearly distinct and into which the Scriptures have not been translated is labeled as a "translation need." Since this ambiguous term is used in a variety of senses by different writers, I have avoided using it altogether in this paper.

3. Language use: distribution of languages (and dialects) in daily life in the ethnic community.
4. Language attitudes: attitudes toward the vernacular language and other languages spoken in the community.

Discussions of such criteria sometimes distinguish between objective and subjective data and between linguistic and sociolinguistic (or sociological) factors. In at least some situations these distinctions prove difficult to maintain.

Techniques such as word-list collecting and studying intelligibility through recorded-text testing are often thought to be objective, and less subject to the judgment of the investigator than techniques used to study the social use of language. However, there is growing evidence that the selection of items for a standard word list, the technique the investigator uses when eliciting the word lists, and his method of determining the pairs of items to be counted as similar can all affect the results, which are usually stated in mathematical terms, which heightens the impression of objectivity.

Similarly, there is concern over the comparability of results of recorded-text testing. Techniques for administering this type of test have been described in detail in Casad's (1974) *Dialect Intelligibility Testing*. Nevertheless, questions have arisen about whether results are comparable when the texts or sets of questions used vary in difficulty or cultural relevance. Fortunately, members of the South Asia survey team and perhaps others are undertaking to study the effects of varying techniques in both word-list counting and recorded-text testing.

It may also be difficult to distinguish linguistic from sociolinguistic factors. For example, in many cases the extent to which a speaker of one dialect understands a related dialect results from a blending of the linguistic factor of linguistic similarity with social factors such as being positively or negatively disposed toward the related dialect or being prepared through previous experience to handle such testing.

Let us now consider some of the factors which are relevant to the decision-making process and some of the procedures which have been developed to assess these factors.

**Intelligibility patterns among related language varieties.** Recorded-text testing has become established as the standard technique for investigating the extent to which speakers of one dialect understand a linguistically related dialect. Often the linguistic variation within a dialect network is sampled by collecting word lists and calculating the percentage of similar vocabulary. Word-list comparison rarely, if ever, provides sufficient information about comprehension among related dialects, but it can provide



useful data regarding which dialects should be included in the recorded-text testing.

If the scores of ten subjects who have answered questions about the content of the same text are quite similar, we usually assume that their scores accurately represent the understanding of their fellows. However, if there is a broader range of scores, we may infer that some of the subjects have had greater opportunity than the rest to learn the other dialect and that, therefore, the scores reflect a combination of inherent similarity of the dialects and varying degrees of dialect learning. In such a case a larger group of subjects, representing various subgroups in the community, must be sought for the testing since we are in this case faced with a form of bilingualism.

**Proficiency in a second language.** If we accept the possibility that some groups may have effective access to the Scriptures in a second language in which they are proficient, it is important for us to evaluate carefully the proficiency of such groups in the second language, whether the proficiency be in a major and genetically unrelated language or be in a distinct, but standard dialect of some particular vernacular. Members of SIL are usually oriented to recognize the value of work in vernacular languages, so they are probably more easily persuaded than others that a group does not have adequate second-language proficiency. However, we are increasingly seeking to involve others, including speakers of major languages, in either preparing or distributing the Scriptures in vernacular languages. In these cases it becomes all the more important to demonstrate clearly the proficiency (or lack of it) of the vernacular-speaking community in the major language. So, our techniques for evaluating second-language proficiency need to be persuasive.

Typically, some members of a speech community have greater opportunity to learn a second language than other members. Therefore, it is important to test the proficiency of a wide range of members of the community. Variables that increase contact with the second language and often found to be significant are: (a) sex, (b) age, (c) level of education, and (d) amount of travel or residence in areas where the second language is spoken.

Several types of tests have been used to probe second-language proficiency. In some surveys a recorded-text test in the second language has been administered to a range of subjects. This technique has the appeal of using a test which is rather easy to develop and which can easily be added to a battery of recorded-text tests administered for dialect intelligibility testing. However, it is doubtful that a single recorded-text test can probe the range of language difficulty required for bilingualism testing

and especially the higher levels of difficulty. Since the factor of second-language proficiency becomes especially critical when there is the possibility that a high percentage of speakers in various subgroups have high levels of second-language proficiency, it is precisely at the upper end of the difficulty scale where our evaluation must be accurate.

Therefore, two other types of test have been developed recently to test second-language proficiency: the Second-Language Oral Proficiency Evaluation (SLOPE) and the Sentence Repetition Test (SRT). The first method is an adaptation for unsophisticated subjects of the oral interview developed by the Foreign Service Institute. It seeks to probe both the active and passive proficiency of the subject. Results of the interview are stated in terms of the FSI levels of 0 to 5. The second method is an adaptation of a technique employed in speech pathology to screen numbers of subjects into groups without attempting to diagnose specific dysfunctions of any subject. In this test the subject is asked to repeat a set of tape-recorded sentences which have been graded for difficulty and ability to discriminate differences in proficiency. The accuracy of the repetitions is scored by the administrator. In the development of a sentence-repetition test, the scores for that test are calibrated in relation to levels of second-language proficiency called Reported Proficiency Evaluation (RPE). Results of the SRT are stated in terms of RPE levels.

The advantages of the SLOPE are that it is a direct test of second-language proficiency and the results are stated in the familiar terms of the FSI scale. However, administering the interview requires the services of a team of three, at least one of whom must have extensive training and certification from a central certifying group. In field tests, conducting and scoring each interview has required considerable time. The SRT is an indirect test of second-language proficiency which infers such ratings from the subject's performance in repeating sentences. It takes considerable time to develop and calibrate such a test for each test language. However, this type of test has proved to be acceptable and nonthreatening to unsophisticated subjects, and it can be administered in just a few minutes, making it feasible to test a large number of subjects in a short time frame. Furthermore, administrators can be trained quickly to score the subjects' performances.

In situations where it is essential to use a direct test or to have results stated in terms of FSI levels and if a longer time is available, the SLOPE test is appropriate for evaluating communal bilingualism. In situations where it is important to test a wide range of subjects in a limited period of time, and if a centrally certified administrator cannot be present to administer all tests, the SRT is appropriate.

**Distribution of languages in the ethnic community.** It is possible for two speech communities to use the same two languages in the course of daily living yet use those languages in very different ways. One community may use the major language only for formal education and central government functions while using the vernacular language in the home, community, local trade, religion, and other domains of community life. The other may use the vernacular when discussing some topics in the home but use only the major language in all other contexts of daily life. The inventory of languages used in the two communities is the same, but the patterns of language use are sharply contrasting. In the former case, the vernacular is in a dominant position with the second language occupying a few rather marginal public roles, while in the latter case the vernacular appears to be severely threatened and even linguistically reduced by the dominance of the second language.

Of course, for our interests, the language that is used in the home domain is very important since that is the environment in which beliefs and values are usually communicated. Typically, this is the stronghold of the vernacular and is one of the reasons for our belief in the power of vernacular languages. On the other hand, we need also to be interested in the overall distribution of languages as in the cases mentioned above. Especially we should not fail to understand the influence exerted by languages used in powerful and prestigious domains, such as education and religion, or in such media as writing, radio, and television. Typically, these are the domains of second languages. If such languages are used extensively in powerful domains and in the media, the potential for development of the vernacular is probably restricted.

In this connection it is helpful to try to understand both the language policies of the nation, where they exist, and the informal language policies, which might be called traditions, of the local community. Both kinds of policy regulate language-use practices. Longstanding, formal language policies can be expected to constrain the direction of change in language use to a considerable extent. Naturally, if formal language policies have not been developed or are changed frequently, language-use patterns will be more unpredictable.

Observation through participation in community life is our most common method for understanding the distribution of languages. Eliciting information from members of the community may also be useful. However, there may be discrepancies between self-reported language use and observations on this topic, which probably reveal less about language use than about language attitudes held, i.e., what the speakers of the language believe—or would like others to believe—about which languages they use in different contexts.

**Attitudes toward the vernacular and other languages.** It is important to know something of the attitudes speakers hold regarding both vernacular languages and second languages that are spoken in their communities. Attitudes of those who are primarily speakers of the vernacular are important, of course, but attitudes of those who are primarily speakers of the major language may also be important.

This is the type of information which is probably the most difficult to collect. In some cases, members of the speech community may be hesitant to share their feelings with outsiders. However, at least as significant an obstacle is the fact that they often have not thought about language attitudes and do not know how to express them. Consequently, information on this topic is likely to be anecdotal and collected informally in the course of living in the community. Researchers sometimes ask speakers of one language how they feel about various kinds of social interaction with speakers of other languages on the assumption that attitudes toward a speaker and attitudes towards his language are intimately related. However, some kinds of social interaction among speakers of different languages are restricted for cultural reasons.

Nevertheless, responses concerning permitted interaction can reveal language attitudes. Indirect tests are used by some researchers for discovering language attitudes, but these have not yet found much application in the unsophisticated speech communities with which we typically deal.

It is also helpful to explore the beliefs which speakers hold concerning the extent of their language community, i.e., to ask them which varieties are part of their language. It would be difficult to carry out a single language project for two communities who speak intelligible varieties of speech but who for social reasons regard their speech varieties as separate languages. By contrast, we should seriously consider the consequences of beginning totally separate language projects for groups which intelligibility testing shows to have distinct languages but which the speakers regard as the same language—not just the same ethnic group. Such a situation may call for a complex language project which would produce for some purposes separate bodies of literature and for other purposes a single body of literature, thus giving recognition to perceptions of linguistic unity.

Decisions about beginning language projects are often based partially on predictions, either stated or unstated, regarding the vitality of the vernacular language and the expected direction and pace of language shift. Such predictions of language vitality are frequently made on the basis of (a) perceptions about language attitudes, (b) observed or reported increases in second-language proficiency on the part of vernacular-language speakers, and (c) observable changes in the contexts in which the various languages of the community are used. It hardly needs to be mentioned that such

predictions are quite hazardous and not infrequently prove to be incorrect. However, they may be more valid if they are founded on documented changes rather than on presumed trends.

Inaccuracy is not the only hazard related to predictions of language vitality. In addition, we should guard against the assumption that new language projects are justified only for languages that show promise of being spoken into the future. Of course, if a language is spoken by only a handful of elderly people it is doubtful that a project could progress far before the language reaches extinction. However, if there is evidence that the language will be spoken for another generation, that in itself should be sufficient since we have a primary obligation to minister effectively to those of our own generation without being unduly concerned about what may be the speech habits of future generations.

In this section and in the two previous ones, I have discussed issues of bilingualism, language use, and language attitudes as though they were totally independent factors. In fact, these factors illuminate various aspects of an implicit competition in many communities between two or more speech varieties regarded by those communities as different languages. In some communities with stable bilingualism, especially those with diglossia, the roles of the languages are apparently fixed, but in many other communities there is evident "jockeying for position" between the languages, with the roles appearing to be in the process of shifting. In either situation the factors of these three types are often interlocking in a kind of "conspiracy" in which the effect of a factor of one type reinforces the effect of a factor of another type. For example, a strong belief in the practical value of using the second language usually reinforces the strength of that second language in various domains of public life for both speaking and writing and promotes rising levels of second-language proficiency. By contrast, low levels of second-language proficiency and acknowledgement of that by speakers of the vernacular tend to limit the domains in which the second language is used in daily life and may reduce the speakers' view of the value of knowing or acquiring that second language.

### **Toward a decision-making process**

The types of information discussed in the preceding sections are useful in making various kinds of decisions regarding language projects. However, not all types of information are employed for the same purpose or at the same stage in the decision-making process.

The various types of information can be incorporated in a four-step decision-making process as follows:

1. Identify the clearly distinct languages.
2. Study the extent of second-language proficiency. Make a decision about whether to begin a language project.
3. Study language-use patterns and language attitudes. Make a decision about what kind of project should be started.
4. Reassess periodically the factors studied in steps two and three and evaluate the suitability of previous decisions.

**Step one.** A clearly fundamental question is that of identifying distinct languages. This is done primarily through dialect intelligibility testing. Through such testing it can be determined that each language variety falls into one of three categories:

1. It is a clearly distinct language; that is, it is not inherently intelligible with any other language.
2. It is clearly not a distinct language; that is, it is inherently intelligible with another language variety.
3. It is a marginally distinct language; that is, the data suggest that this variety may be sufficiently intelligible with another language variety to enable speakers to use a common body of literature. With some language varieties of this type it may be wise to wait until materials in the other language variety are available for testing of comprehension and acceptability.

**Step two.** Since the possibility should be considered that literature can be effectively provided for a group of people in a second language in which they are proficient, it is important to undertake a study of their second-language proficiency. If that possibility is not evaluated at the time of the initial decision, it is likely to be raised later on in a way that will be disturbing to those engaged in the project.

However, if there is no immediate prospect of a language project being started for such a group, it may be wise in some situations to defer the study of bilingualism until there is such a project. Levels of second-language proficiency sometimes change rapidly. If the decision to start a language project is not made until some years after the bilingualism data are collected, parts of the bilingualism study will almost certainly need to be redone.

It is often wise to initiate a study of second-language proficiency with a pilot study, which looks for indirect and more easily collected indications of bilingualism levels.

Observations made about the frequency with which the second language is used may provide indirect evidence about levels of proficiency in the

second language since frequent use often, but not always, leads to proficient use.

The contexts in which the second language is used in daily life may provide further evidence based on the level of proficiency demanded by those contexts. For example, using a second language in an occupation which is dependent on language usually requires a higher level of proficiency than does using a second language in an occupation, such as fishing or agriculture, not heavily dependent on language.

A study of the sources of second-language proficiency may be helpful. For example, if higher levels of proficiency are gained only through secondary school and most people in the community complete only primary school, it is unlikely that many attain high levels of proficiency in the second language. By contrast, if most young people in such a community complete secondary school, a more extensive study of second-language proficiency is probably called for.

Reports of vernacular speakers about their second-language proficiency and evaluations by mother-tongue speakers of the second language may also prove helpful in drawing conclusions about general levels of second-language proficiency.

If the pilot study suggests that high levels of second-language proficiency are widespread in various sub-groups of the community, a more extensive bilingualism study is called for. In that case a profile should be developed of a village thought to be representative. For developing such a profile, information is gathered about the members of each household. This information includes factors expected to be significant in the distribution of bilingual proficiency throughout the community—sex, age, education, occupation, travel, and other widespread language-contact factors. After the size of each of these subgroups in the community is calculated, a sampling of subjects is sought which will accurately represent the various subgroups. Even if it proves impossible to select a sampling that truly reflects the numerical strength of the sub-groups, the profile can guide in determining the weight to be attached to the scores of the subjects in each subgroup.

**Steps three and four.** After a bilingualism test of the sort described earlier has been administered to a representative group of subjects, levels of proficiency in the various subgroups of the community are examined so as to learn whether high levels of second-language proficiency are restricted to one or two advantaged subgroups or whether they are well distributed throughout the community.

In many cases a decision can be made at this point about whether a language project should be initiated. In such cases a project is warranted if (a) the vernacular is a clearly distinct language, and (b) high levels of

second-language proficiency are either lacking or are not well distributed throughout the community.

In some other cases, especially if the levels of second-language proficiency are only moderately high, the proper decision may be unclear. In such cases it may be wise to defer a decision until further types of information such as language-use patterns and language attitudes can be considered.

A decision not to initiate a language project because of factors which can change should be made with special caution since it is at this point that a group which really needs vernacular literature could be denied it because of an inappropriate decision. Of course, the factors in a situation such as this should be reassessed periodically and the decision reviewed.

**Specifying the nature of the project.** Even after a basic decision has been reached to begin a language project, it is not always clear just what type of project is warranted. Some projects must include a major effort in introducing the skills of literacy, whereas others can simply reinforce the efforts of other people to promote literacy or produce literature. In some projects the public use of vernacular Scriptures can be expected, whereas in others there is a need to focus on promoting the private use of vernacular Scriptures, at least at first, because public use of Scriptures in the major language is already well established. Some projects call for early production of vernacular literature of various sorts to meet an obvious interest, whereas others must focus first on changing local attitudes toward using the vernacular in written form.

Decisions about what kind of language project should be started should be based on a wide spectrum of information. Data about patterns of language use in the community and about attitudes held toward the inventory of languages used by the community should be available before such decisions are made.

However, use of such information is not entirely limited to decisions about what kind of project should be started. As stated above, information of this type is sometimes required for reaching a decision about whether to start a project in a marginal situation, especially where the implications of bilingualism are unclear.

**Periodical reassessment.** When a decision has been made to start a language project of a certain type and after the project is underway, it is important to reassess the situation periodically to make sure that the factors which suggested that type of program at the original decision point have not changed.



It is not so likely that factors which led to a decision not to start a language project will change so that starting such a project will be necessary. However, the possibility of such a change cannot be ruled out, and the more changeable factors, such as bilingual proficiency and language attitudes, should be periodically reassessed.

Beyond decisions of whether a language project should be started and what should be the nature of such a project lie decisions of which language projects should receive attention first.

Certainly, there are factors apart from the ones discussed above which affect what we do. In some cases speakers of a language express an interest in having a language project and demonstrate that interest by providing workers who are to be trained and helped to carry out a project in their own language. In other cases, such interest is expressed by Christians ministering in the area even though they are not themselves mother-tongue speakers of the language. In still other cases, an expatriate team may sense a special burden from God for a given language group. Almost invariably we seek to develop a project of some sort in any of the above situations if feasible, even though other factors may not suggest special urgency.

#### **Areas for further discussion and study**

Many of the issues discussed here are matters on which there seems to be consensus. General agreement about their importance was reflected in the discussions at the Language Assessment Conference.

We seem to agree that decisions about where to begin language projects must be based on information concerning intelligibility among related dialects. Information about linguistic (especially lexical) similarity is helpful in guiding us to places where intelligibility testing should be carried out and gives us a preliminary indication of the results that may be expected from testing. However, an understanding of the limits of the area where the language is spoken (or the range in intelligible dialects) is generally only derived from the results of intelligibility testing.

We regularly interpret the results of intelligibility testing by assigning each variety a status which is "clear" (clearly a distinct language or clearly not a distinct language) or "marginal" (marginally distinct). With the many varieties which are marginal we feel keenly the need for further kinds of information.

We also regularly gather and interpret data concerning bilingualism, language-use patterns, and language attitudes, and make estimates of language vitality. There is probably less agreement on the precise role that

these factors should play in the decision-making process. Some of my beliefs regarding their use have been stated in the previous section.

Interestingly enough, there appears to be agreement on some factors which we do NOT regard as critical in making decisions about language projects. I mention these here because they have been mentioned in recent discussions as factors which may be prominent in the thinking of some members. I would like to mention three such factors:

1. Size of the language group
2. Expectation of favorable response to Scripture in any language or medium
3. Approval by local leaders

As a group, I believe that we do not consider the size of the language group as critical once it has been established that there are enough speakers to form a viable speech community (however defined) and that they are distributed in age groups other than just the most elderly. I believe that we are prepared to undertake a language project for any small language group which includes speakers who need and could use vernacular materials by the time they would be ready.

As a group, I believe that we do not consider as a critical factor the likelihood of a favorable response to the Scriptures. That is to say, I believe that we are prepared to support the translation of the Scriptures for a group even when the group has not accepted the Scriptures in a major language of the area and when religious and cultural factors do not encourage us to expect a favorable response, at least not initially.

As a group, I believe that we do not regard as essential for beginning a language project either a request for, or approval of, a language project from local leaders, political or religious. Of course, community support for a project is an advantage of enormous proportions. It is probably especially important in communities where higher levels of bilingualism or ambivalent attitudes toward the vernacular are found. Lack of such support has significant implications for the nature and emphases of any language project undertaken for that group. However, I believe that we are prepared to begin a language project, if needed for reasons of language and if feasible, for a language group in which we cannot see evidence of support from local leaders.

The conditions in different nations and regions vary considerably. So, factors which seem crucial in one area may appear to have little relevance or importance in another. Consequently, the details of making decisions about language projects will probably continue to vary and will involve the judgment of local administrators, who, while considering agreed-upon

factors and procedures, will in many cases need to exercise their own judgment.

In spite of these differences it is important that we agree upon the basic factors which we all consider when making decisions about beginning (or continuing) language projects. There appear to be some matters in this area about which we do not have agreement. I will mention a few of them here in the hope that further discussion will show us that in fact we do have essential agreement or else will help us reach consensus on these issues.

1. Should we assume that the mother tongue is always the most effective language in which to use the Scriptures? Are there situations in which vernacular speakers who have effective access to a second language could, for various social reasons, be better served by using the Scriptures in that second language?
2. Are we committed to begin or encourage others to begin a language project for every clearly distinct language if at all feasible? Are there situations in which we would conclude that it is not worthwhile to begin a project for a clearly distinct language without the Scriptures?
3. Do we need to collect and consider information other than dialect-intelligibility information? Are bilingualism level, language use, language attitudes, etc., relevant for deciding where to begin a language project? Are there other types of information relevant for deciding what type of language project should be started?
4. Some types of information can be ranked along a scale of more favorable or less favorable to the use of vernacular literature or can indicate that a group has greater dependence or less dependence on Scriptures in their vernacular language. If we are to use such information in making decisions about beginning language projects, should we rank potential language projects according to a system of priorities? If so, what should that system of priorities be?
5. What levels of second-language proficiency are required for a person to make adequate use of the Scriptures in a second language? How widely must such levels of second-language proficiency be distributed through the speech community? Can we (or, need we) reach consensus on this matter?