

The following was taken from "Notes on Translation No. 10 7-64" circulated from Wycliffe Bible Translators Mexico Translation Center at Ixmiquilpan, for the help of WBT's translators who work and pray through the unique problems they face in putting God's Word into 329 other languages, hitherto unwritten.

CONSULTANTS (translation experts) are always on call to help the translator - on-the-scene. The Auca translation was checked in the early stages by Dr. William Wonderly, Latin American Translation Consultant of the American Bible Society, who suggested solutions to the knotty problems, pointed out translator errors, and gave guide-lines for technique. Later the complete manuscript was checked for accuracy in content by Ecuador Branch Translator Consultant, Bruce R. Moore, who was working on his own translation of Colorado Mark. Finally it was gone over word by word in a grammar accuracy check by Catherine Peeke, co-laborer in the Auca tribe, who is working on a complete grammar of the language.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK IN AUCA

An idiomatic translation of the Auca gospel of Mark is on the presses. From the following excerpts from a letter written by Cathy Peeke to Ethel Wallis, you will see illustrated several basic principles of good translation.

"...The Auca translation must be the most idiomatic translation ever made by a translator who is not a native speaker of the target language. This is true for two reasons, I believe: Rachel learned the language monolingually and has taught Dayuma and the others monolingually, and the structure of the Auca language and thought is so distinct, even from other Indian languages around it, as to preclude any direct translation...

"...Rachel knows the morphological structure of Auca and all of the syntactic structure except some nebulous points which we have been unable to pin down. She may not be able to express these things in sophisticated linguistic terminology, but she is aware of them. What's more, she knows quite a lot about the semantic structure, and that is a real achievement!

"...I have referred to Auca thought-forms or semantic structure. It is this aspect of the job Rachel has undertaken that causes me to marvel at the quality of the finished task. Equivalences are there which I would never have dreamed of in my wildest moments -- I shudder to think how different the translation would have been if I had undertaken it with Dayuma, using Quichua as a basis. Such a procedure would almost certainly have caused her to close her mind to the potential riches of expression in her own tongue.

"And it is this novelty of expression in Auca Mark which has prompted this letter. Perhaps it is simply because I have a real acquaintance with so few languages, but it seems to me that the semantic problems are unusually great. There are, first of all, deficiencies in vocabulary because the Aucas have apparently lived without any cognizance of what the civilized world about them is doing. In this category lie the concepts of buying and selling, or even of trading: any form of specialized labor, as a carpenter, fisherman, teacher, sower; any religious or governmental organization (although there is, conveniently, a word for 'chief' [Correction--there was no word for 'chief' --Dayuma coined the word as 'overseer']!) any concept of village or city; any idea of law, trial, or authority. They knew neither bread nor paper, so used their term for wasp's nest for both; paper money is the same, but coins are "metal fish scales!" In Mark 6:8, 'wasp's nest food' is differentiated from 'wasp's

nest which is given-taken.'

"They do not know horses, donkeys, nor cattle, and have never seen grape vines. They do not use grinding stones nor know of stones used in building. Market places and political boundaries are unknown to them. They know no servant-master relationship, no rich, no poor. Teaching-learning situations are not recognized.

"The fact that Dayuma has had experience in the outside world and understands something of the political, economic, educational, and religious systems of her own country alleviates the situation quite drastically. She explains, of course, the things which she has seen, and she and Rachel have introduced many 'artifacts' of the outside world, as well as some of its customs. This does not guarantee, however, that her people really grasp such concepts, and it does not help the situation of the lowland Aucas who have not such an interpreter. More important, Dayuma's understanding of such things does not mean that she can express the concepts in her own language, for the language simply has no words for them. In the case of unknown animals or plants, a loan word is often used, or a suffix is attached to the name of a known animal or plant, to indicate that this one is similar to the one named.

"More difficult are the terms for specialists in a certain occupation. In these cases, a descriptive clause is generally used, 'The one who... s (customarily).' The difficulty with this is not that it violates Auca syntax, but that it occurs with abnormal frequency in Mark as compared with any other Auca text. This will become apparent when you realize that even the word 'disciple' must be translated as 'those who live following Jesus,' and that 'scribe,' 'priest,' 'teacher,' and 'prophet' are handled in similar ways.

"Such clauses are complicated in many instances by the syntactic device in Auca of juxtaposing two verbs in a clause-result relationship. Thus it is impossible to say 'one who teaches' without including also the learner, thus: 'one who teaches that (they) may hear,' or, more literally, 'one who speaks (they) hear.'

"Of course some of these problems are not uncommon in translation work. Another such problem, not unique to Auca translation, is that indirect discourse must almost always be rendered by direct discourse. On the surface, this would seem simple enough, but there are unsuspected complications in that the person and number of the direct quotation have to be decided from the context, this complexity being heightened by the fact that such rendering may produce quotes within quotes within quotes. This is an especially common problem because any expression of desire is also treated as direct discourse, the verb of desire being simply the verb 'to say.'

"A case in point is Mark 3:12, 'Jesus spoke like a chief, "You all keep quiet! I say, "Don't be telling who I am," he said. "I want you not to be telling..."'

"In this case, of course, the innermost quote is actually indirect, with retention of the first person, but it is in just such cases that one must be particularly careful to get the right person.

"Another instance is Mark 5:12. Which is, in rather literal English, the following: 'And so the demons spoke to Jesus, "We say, 'You say, "Go ye into the swine's flesh," we will go enter,'" they said.' In other words, they were saying, "We want you to tell us to go enter the swine's flesh, and we will do it."

"Pluralization presents no special problems in Auca, except in the case of certain nouns, notable in the mass nouns. Note Mark 6:39, 40: 'Jesus said, "Now sit ye down. This bunch of you, this bunch of you, this bunch of you, and this bunch of you, sit on the grassy place." The ones who were in a group, the ones who were in a group sat down.'

"It will be noticed that no numbers are expressed in verse 40. The Aucas (using hands and feet morphemes in their numerals for five and above) can count to twenty and in multiples of ten or of twenty. But this process loses all interest for them when it passes thirty or forty; the reason will be apparent from a glance at the expression for 'forty days' in Mark 1:13. '... ononpo tipaenpoga onöwa tipäwa, ayäe ononpo tipaenpoga onöwa tipäwa maninponae...' This means, in English, something like 'The number of a complete hand, the number of a complete foot, and the number

of a complete hand, the number of a complete foot, such a number of days.' Some of the words in the English translation represent affixes in the Auca expression.

"But the most difficult to elicit are those concepts which take a completely different turn in Auca semantics and hence require a syntactic construction different from what we would expect to find in a direct translation. An illustration of this is such a seemingly straightforward concept as, 'He could not,' in Mark 1:45. '... Itotä, Nañi quëwenani weca, aedö caete idonque gobo. Ononque awemö gotobäf gobopa imo, ajantapa...' This translates the part of the verse which says, '... Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places...' Literally, the portion would read: Jesus said, 'How shall I go openly to the place where many people live? I shall just go as one who goes about unseen.'

"Thus, the idea of impossibility is rendered by the question, 'How...?' (Note also that a circumlocution had to be made here to translate 'city.') I might add that when I tried to elicit a translation of the Quichua verb phrase meaning 'not to be able,' I drew a blank until after Rachel had struggled through the problem monolingually, after which Dayuma casually told me, 'How...?'

"A similar situation appeared in Mark 5:35, for 'Why troublest thou the Master...?' Which is rendered: 'Why don't you say to the one who customarily speaks that we may hear, "You are not to come"?' The non-existent word for 'trouble' or 'bother' is thus handled by a circumlocution. Note here also that the clause expressing 'master' or 'teacher' includes the person of the hearer, thus demanding strict attention to the situation to determine whether the hearer is 'he,' 'we,' 'they,' etc. In this case it is assumed that He is Master of the speaker and of others.

"It would be impossible to elicit an Auca word for many verbs which we consider quite common, such as, 'to accuse,' 'to command,' 'to question,' 'to take counsel,' 'to condemn,' or 'to rebuke.' But since these are all, at least potentially, verbs of indirect quotation, each of them is handled in Auca by the verb, 'to speak,' or the verb 'to say,' plus some definite

feature within the quotation (which is, of course, direct) to indicate the particular manner of speaking. I like especially the handling of the verb 'to rebuke,' as in Mark 4:39, 'He...rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, "Peace, be still." And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.' Which is: 'Jesus then said, "Why ever (does the) wind blow, for goodness sake?" Then it became not blowing. "Water quiet down, don't do it!" He said, Then the water quickly quieted down and it was not doing anything.' The tone of rebuke is carried in the quotation by the suffix-më on the interrogative word, quimë, giving the force of "Why ever?" or "Why on earth?" But even stronger is the suffix-wë on the verb, paemaewëë, which seems to mean, 'You're always doing it the wrong way; don't do it, for goodness' sake.'

"In this same verse the Auca attention to completing one process before the other is described, requires that the wind be first rebuked and settled before attention is given to water, whose quieting requires a different verb. There would be no way to say with a single verb that both the wind and the sea were calm.

"To express an absolute superlative in Auca, it is necessary to say there is no other like the one in question. In Mark 4:31, 32, '...the smallest of all the seeds on the earth;...the greatest of all shrubs...' may be translated as: '...it is very tiny...There is no such tiny seed like this anywhere...No bush grows as large as this one is.'

"If some of these translations give the impression that it takes a whole Auca sentence to translate one English word, or a paragraph to translate one English sentence--that impression is often true! Witness the first verse in Mark, which says more or less: 'God's Son is Jesus Christ. The things written about Him are very wonderful. This is the way it was from the beginning.' Thus the second sentence translated 'gospel,' the third translates 'beginning,' and the first translates 'Jesus Christ, the Son of God.'

"On the other hand, it may take but a word or two to express in Auca an English sentence concerning situations familiar to the Aucas in their everyday life. Look at Mark 6:42 'Tomooponi caenantapa.' Or, 'They ate to the full.' Here 'Tomooponi' expresses

'to the very fullest,' while 'caenantapa' translates 'they ate.' Or Mark 6:53, much shortened in Auca: 'Ginetadibæ tao waente ñä caemincadani.' 'And when they had crossed over' is all contained in the one word, 'tao;' 'at Gennesaret' is transliterated 'Ginetadibæ;' and 'ñä caemincadani,' meaning 'they tied up' carries the whole meaning of 'they came to land...and moored to the shore.' So commonplace is this concept. But would one be willing to have the sentence expressed so simply if he were eliciting from another language, or would the informant hit upon such simple, everyday terminology if he were asked to translate all that the English says? I think this would have been greatly expanded if I had asked for it in Quichua.

"Of course abstract ideas, especially spiritual or theological ones, are always difficult to express in a language which is bound to the material. You simply can't receive unexpressed things, in their way of thinking, so Mark 11:24 comes out: 'That being the case, whatever you speak to God about, always speak, believing: God will do for you (on your behalf) according to what you ask.'

"It is also a little difficult to give something in exchange for such an abstract idea as (the life of) the soul, as in Mark 8:36, which is, accordingly, rendered thus: 'Whatever shall one give (so that another may) take, and he himself in exchange shall live?'"