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A BLEND LANGUAGE AS A TEACHING TOOL:  
THE STRUCTURE AND GOALS OF INTERGLOSS\*

by

Steven Csik

Indiana University

In 1976 the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) established the Institute for Curricular and Instructional Innovation in Language at Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, under the direction of Dr. Carl Ziegler with Brian McKinney as Associate Director. The specific objective of the Institute has been to create a language concepts curriculum for students who are under-prepared for dealing with foreign languages. The resulting course, "Inter-Language Concepts", has as its subject matter a pedagogical, "blend" language termed "Intergloss" which serves as the medium for presenting general notions of grammar. Students who have had no previous foreign language training in high school or who have studied one year of a foreign language in high school with minimal achievement as well as students who need additional work with basic Standard English have been assigned to the course in the summer immediately preceding their freshman year. 260 students participated in 1978 at Bloomington; 280, in 1979. Since its creation 1,300 students have taken the course in three educational settings: Indiana University's Groups Special Services Program in Bloomington, and the Upward Bound Programs at Notre Dame University, South Bend, Indiana, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Since 1977 I have taught this course in Bloomington and will in this paper describe the structure of Intergloss and the goals of the course.

Intergloss is a blend language--a combination of English and German. Lexical morphemes--nouns, verb stems, adjectives, adverbs--retain their English forms. Grammatical morphemes--personal endings and tense markers on verbs, auxiliary verbs, definite and indefinite articles, pronouns, prepositions--are, however, in German. Three cases--nominative, accusative, dative--and five tenses--present, past, future, present perfect and past perfect--are modeled after the German forms and result in the corresponding changes in Intergloss noun phrases, verb endings and word order.

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Thus typical Intergloss sentences are: 1. *Er schwimmt durch das Wasser.* 2. *Mit einer Lady haben wir gesprochen.* 3. *Ich besuchte gestern einen Doktor, den du kennst.* The various German paradigms are introduced one at a time, and until the German form is introduced, the student utilizes the English one. Thus sentence (1) above would undergo the following evolution during the course: a) *He swims through the water.* b) *He swims through the Water.* c) *Er schwimmt through the Water.* d) *Er schwimmt durch das Wasser.*

Carl Ziegler in collaboration with Brian McKinney has written a textbook for the course. The initial chapter opens with a focus on the verb in simple declarative sentences. Subsequent sections of chapter 1 deal with verb paradigms for regular verbs and for *have* and *be* in English and in Intergloss. These sections also discuss the present progressive tense form in English and word order in both English and Intergloss for sentences other than simple declarative structures. Later chapters expand the focus of attention to the noun phrase and its various forms in accordance with person, number, gender and case. The other tenses are also introduced until the past perfect tense appears in the final chapter. The past perfect tense then offers the opportunity to present the notion of subordinate clause because of its frequent occurrence with that tense: *After I had eaten the vegetables, I ate the meat.* This notion of adverbial clauses as dependent clause then serves as an introduction to the dependent nature of relative clauses. Thus the text systematically progresses from simple declarative sentences to embedded sentences and deals with word order variance, noun phrase variance and verb inflections during the progression.

The goals of Intergloss teaching fall into the following six categories: 1. the teaching of German morphology and syntax, 2. the teaching of Standard English morphology and syntax, 3. the teaching of general linguistic concepts, 4. the development of logical and clear self-expression, 5. the development of necessary study skills, 6. the creation of an initial success experience for the student. Let me elaborate each of these goals.

#### 1. The teaching of German morphology and syntax

As I have already indicated, the student learns a considerable amount of information that is pure German morphology and syntax. The morphology the student acquires is as follows:

- a. The infinitive ending *-en*.
- b. The verb endings in all persons and number for regular verbs in the present tense and for weak and strong verbs in the past tense.

- c. The forms for *haben*, 'have', and *sein*, 'be', in both present and past tenses, with *haben* functioning as the auxiliary for the perfect tenses.
- d. The general form of affixes on past participles, e.g., *getalkt*, *geswumen*.
- e. The paradigm for *werden*, 'will', which serves as the auxiliary for the future tense.
- f. The definite and indefinite article paradigms in the three genders in singular and in the plural for the three cases of nominative, accusative and dative.
- g. The personal pronouns in all persons, number and the three cases above.
- h. The interrogative pronouns in the three cases.
- i. The relative pronouns in the three cases and for all three genders singular and for the plural.
- j. The five German prepositions which govern the accusative case: *durch*, *fuer*, *gegen*, *ohne*, *um*.
- k. Three German prepositions which govern the dative case: *mit*, *von*, *zu*.
- l. Three German prepositions which govern either the accusative or dative cases: *in*, *hinter*, *unter*.

The rules of German syntax the student acquires are as follows:

- a. The placement of the inflected verb as the second main constituent of the sentence.
- b. The fronting of the inflected verb (be it main or auxiliary) to form yes/no questions: *Ich walke home.* ⇒ *Walke ich home?*
- c. The fronting of a constituent other than the subject or verb: *Ich walke home.* ⇒ *Home walke ich.*
- d. The placement of the main verb at the end of sentences with tenses having compound verb forms, i.e., future and present and past perfect: *Ich hatte mit ihm getalkt.*
- e. The placement of the inflected verb at the end of dependent clauses: *Er is der Man, den du geknowen hast.*

The course does not stress proper German pronunciation of the purely German items. Instructors are expected to use near approximations of German pronunciation and students are encouraged to do likewise. However, the instructor does not penalize the student for incorrect German pronunciation since one of the motivations for the creation of the course was to remove the problems of pronunciation and memorization of lexicon from the language learning process for the time being and to let the student focus his attention on the concepts found in the morphology and syntax of an inflected language.

## 2. The teaching of Standard English morphology and syntax

Because English and Intergloss are constantly being compared, the student also acquires the syntax and morphology of Standard English. The items of English which the text stresses can be summarized as follows:

- a. The third person singular *-s* verb inflection.
- b. The paradigm for *have* and *be* in present and past tenses.
- c. Word order in declarative and interrogative sentences.
- d. Plural formation.
- e. The personal pronoun paradigm in the nominative and the objective cases.
- f. The interrogative pronouns *what*, *who*, *whom*, and *to whom*.
- g. The principal parts of common weak and strong verbs.
- h. Verb forms requiring an auxiliary and main verb: the present progressive, future, present perfect and past perfect tenses.
- i. Indirect objects and objects of *to/for* as transforms of one another: *I gave him the ball.* ⇒ *I gave the ball to him.*
- j. The relative pronouns *who*, *whom* and *which*.
- k. Dependent clauses in the form of adverbial or relative clauses.

Some of these items of Standard English, especially a, b, e, f, g, h, and j, may be different from the corresponding ones of the student's own dialect. In that sense this goal of teaching Standard English may be considered "remedial". It is however made clear to the student that what he is learning is "Academic English"--the term "Standard English" is not

employed--which is not meant to necessarily supplant his own dialect but is being taught so that the student may use it in an academic context.

### 3. The teaching of general linguistic concepts

If the teaching of German and English morphology and syntax were the only goals of the course, it would hardly warrant the title "Inter-Language Concepts". Both the instructor and the text want to make clear to the student that the concepts he is learning are not limited to German and English but can be utilized for the study of other languages. The text introduces a paradigm from Melanesian Pidgin in its introductory section to impress upon the student that "blend" languages do exist for other than pedagogical reasons. In my own teaching I like to use Hungarian in order to introduce the influence affixes on nouns can have on grammatical function. Hungarian serves this purpose well since word order is relatively free and the direct object is marked simply by a -t suffix. Thus the student can see that--unlike English--word order change will not destroy the essential meaning of a sentence because subject and direct object nouns are marked by zero and -t respectively.

The exercises in the text reinforce the notion that the student is learning general linguistic concepts along with the specific details of English or Intergloss. For example, a favored exercise format is that of "set exercises". A general example of set exercises is as follows: a group of three or four pronouns or articles are listed as members of a set to be considered. The student may be asked to identify the concept--say, a specific case--that is common to all the members of the set. Or the student may be asked to identify the one of the three or four set members that does not fit into the otherwise unifying concept, and he must offer an explanation of why that member does not fit. Terms such as PERSON, NUMBER, GENDER, CASE, SUBJECT, DIRECT OBJECT and other traditional terms of grammar thus become part of the student's active vocabulary.

A specific list of the concepts the student learns would include the following:

- a. The concept of the paradigm.
- b. The parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction.
- c. The inflection of verbs according to tense and person and number of the subject.
- d. The declension of articles, pronouns and nouns according to person, number, gender and case.
- e. The distinction between regular and irregular verbs.

- f. The distinction between auxiliary and main verbs.
- g. Sentence structure as variance of declarative word order.
- h. Articles as definite and indefinite.
- i. The distinction between formal and informal forms in second person pronouns.
- j. Agreement between pronoun and antecedent in accordance with number and gender.
- k. The grammatical function of noun phrases as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, and objects of prepositions.
- l. The relationship between case and grammatical function.
- m. Adverbial subordinate clauses and relative clauses as dependent clauses.

#### 4. The development of logical and clear self-expression

The teacher makes clear to the students that they are expected to verbalize in class that which they have prepared outside of class. The students must have the feeling that they are not in class to learn--learning is to have gone on in the process of doing homework--but rather are in class to present, to perform what they have learned. The teacher must elicit from the student an elaboration of his answer, an elaboration that reflects that the student has an in-depth understanding of an answer and can express that answer at length and with clarity by associating one idea logically to the next. The following exchange is typical of the classroom dialogue: Given the sentence, *Das Cat bitt den Man*, 'The cat bites the man', the teacher asks: "What case is *das Cat* in?"

Student: Nominative.

Teacher: How do you know?

Student: It's the subject.

Teacher: How do you know it's the subject?

Student: Because it's first in the sentence.

Teacher: Are subjects always first?

Student: No.

Teacher: When aren't they?

Student: In alternate declarative sentences.

Teacher: How do you know that this sentence isn't alternate declarative and *den Man* isn't the subject?

Student: Because it's in the accusative case.

Teacher: What tells you that?

etc.

The student may then be asked to recapitulate the arguments in the dialogue in a coherent verbal paragraph. The point is that the student, in his presentation, associates one fact to the next in a logical and clear progression.

The final two goals are less linguistically oriented than are the first three or four. I would however like to mention them in summary fashion while realizing that such a summary does not do justice to the importance they have in the course.

##### 5. The development of necessary study skills

Because many of these students have not had a strong academic experience in high school, they are lacking basic study skills. One of the first notions they need to adopt is that of spending adequate time with the homework. This is a topic both text and instructor stress. The students must also be shown what careful reading means. Careful reading is, in a sense, built into the text since exercises appear at intervals of approximately one after each paragraph of text so that the student must consider and apply immediately the half-dozen or so sentences he has just read. The instructor must also make an effort to show the students how memorization can be aided by associating new information with what has already been learned. For example, when confronted with the German indefinite article paradigm, the student may not realize that he need not memorize a new set of isolated facts but can associate and correlate this paradigm with the definite article paradigm he already knows. In addition to classroom teaching, the instructor will find himself conducting out-of-class tutorials to show his students how to learn from the text. The students, for their part, are very willing to devote that extra time to the learning process.

##### 6. The creation of an initial success experience

These students are--and they know it--"under-prepared", "high risk" students who might feel more defensive and insecure about their academic

abilities than does the average freshman. "Inter-Language Concepts" is organized and conducted in such a way as to make success for the student maximally possible. This does not mean that the course is easy or good grades are distributed gratis. It does mean that the student is given multiple opportunities to show that he has mastered the material. Homework is redone when it is done poorly; tutorials and follow-up exams are offered if the student does poorly on an exam. If the student is willing to devote the additional time and care to the learning process, Inter-Language Concepts has the facilities, in terms of tutorials and follow-up exams, to assure the student a good chance at success. Thus the student's initial college experience is one that reinforces his sense of himself as a potentially successful college student.