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LANGRAMS--On Devising, Validating, and  
Using Succinct Geolinguistic Topical  
Catalyzers for Language Learners  
and Other Specialists

V. Lynn Tyler

Preface

WHY learn LANGUAGE(s)? A capable Ph.D. specialist on campus responded extemporaneously:

"Because you have to, for many reasons: if you want to eat, or when you are a baby, you learn types of language to get what you WANT. If you are called on a mission, or are to travel abroad, or have a high school requirement; or, maybe you have an insatiable desire to Learn Languages(!) (That may be less frequent!); it may be that you are going to want to COMMUNICATE... or, perhaps, just ENJOY. Or, you may be somehow "behind enemy lines" of some nature, and you want to get out the best way. Say...how about a general education requirement?"

For whatever purpose, a LanGram can potentially provide resource aids to build maps of language questions: support without stifling, or enhancing without inhibiting. In the study of INTERNATIONAL GRAMMARS, using a LANGUETICS model [See Intercultural Communicative Indicators model, available from L.I.R.C.], we find a need for accurate DIRECTION for language learning and use. That is, for LANGUAGE in the fullest senses, significant cultural patterns, contents, contexts, and modes.

Alfred Korsybski's language qualifier was, "The map does not represent all of the territory." (See Farb, Peter, Word Play. A. Knopf, 1973. 1969.) This indication may be that to learn languages one has to know the direction to GO, the DESTINATION desired, and HOW best to get there. Only to "learn a language" may be insufficient, unless one is anxious to mentally meander as a wave driven in an ocean storm. Even with direction, "all the territory" of language is seldom if ever achieved by even native users.

Combining proposals of Seymour Ferish and Edward T. Hall (in Tyler, et al. Reading Between the Lines, E.R.I., Provo, Utah, 1978.) we can identify clues that our mental LANGUAGE MAPS can give direction based only on our own expanding cultural experience. However, our personal LANGUAGE MAPS provide limited information probably little better than those used, comparatively, by Columbus, sailing West in 1492. When realistically applied to the complex shifting situations of life, they can lead us to great continents of understanding -- those of human experience, with language that is largely unexplored -- and about which we know MUCH but yet relatively next to nothing.

President David O. McKay has said that to LEARN A LANGUAGE is to learn another way of thinking; i.e., how "they" think and feel, and WHY. (Secrets of a Happy Life, Bookcraft, SLC, Utah. 1967. pp. 51-52.) We ask: WHOSE thinking? About WHAT? When? In what "manner"? (Note Pres. S. W. Kimball's request to present messages in a MANNER others can grasp and understand. SLC/April, 1974. See also D & C 1:24, et al.)

So, what is or should be the direction(s) or our language learning -- the purposes and the processes? Do we proceed to "learn EFIK" of Nigeria, or do we map out our time, space, and procedures? Do we seek validity? For which topics or of what USE to us? Do we aim for the destination from the start?

This presentation approaches part of a much larger project (Intercultural Communicative Indicators -- Linguistics) to MAP all significant or critical learning and use of language in its broadest (including COMMON) senses: verbal, para-verbal, non-verbal, and para-normal, especially as these contextually related for total message transfer. Our purpose here is to suggest that devising, validating, and using aids to language learning and use requires knowing WHAT to learn and use, according to the predilections, presuppositions, and experience of the learner/user. Catalyzing "map use" can make the purpose and the process of each person involved a fascination, an interest, and a discovery in the constantly expanding fields of exploration called "language."

An abstract of a LanGram would answer at least the questions posed in this presentation but would not be limited to them alone, or may use only selected approaches.

## Introduction

What is a LanGram? An immediate and practical orientation to the value and positive challenges of learning and appropriately using the verbal and non-verbal languages of the peoples of the world.

They pose significant questions and suggest a meaningful series of responses as to:

- 1) What a person may already know or can readily discover/experience/practice/enjoy;
- 2) What are the most helpful:
  - a) CUES -- explicit indicators of meaning;
  - b) CLUES -- implicit indicators of meaning;
  - c) CODES -- special senses;
  - d) CAVEATS -- what to use in particular ways or to avoid; and

- e) Resources -- follow up aids for meaningful and adequate language development and special use.

Why LanGrams?

Effective communication between people who use differing languages usually goes beyond common (even when accurate) translation. It normally requires orientation to backgrounds, particular socio-linguistic details, and uniqueness. Most recent reliable resources become all the more important to those who want to increase their understanding of how and why certain peoples use distinct languages in our rapidly integrating world.

Who can USE LanGrams?

Writers and editors of LanGrams can refine their own familiarity with the given language(s). Travelers, correspondents, program administrators, media and other communicators, and language learners for unique purposes -- all can profit from knowing peoples through up-to-date orientations to their languages. Extended learning can be facilitated via optimal resources (texts, people, institutions, systems, et al.).

What RESOURCES can LanGrams Writers use?

Experience of self and many others is central. Reliable insights and feelings of practitioners will be validated before LanGrams are shared publicly. As users of LanGrams find new and more refined data and resources, the LanGrams are to be up-dated. Sources, cited in appropriate editorial format, can benefit all users. Obviously, not as many or as detailed references are to be found for each of the world's more than 5,000 spoken languages and their related dialects. Validity and reliability will vary. But, the "best" data and teaching and sharing in-print methods are expected to be used as research, development, and publication takes place. New resources and expanded experience will make such developments possible.

What QUESTIONS and TOPICS should be used to elicit appropriate LanGram data?

Someone has said that half of the great knowledge of the world is the APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS (and the other half -- meaningful answers). The "guideline" questions used for the LanGram development and use will constitute the majority of this presentation, with helpful illustrations being taken from current LanGram developments. The "guideline" questions are used to catalyze pertinent and language/culture-specific detailed responses concerning both verbal and non-verbal messages. It is anticipated that the LanGrams will aid users to:

- 1) Learn EMPATHY for people who use the language in their particularly unique circumstances.

- 2) Work with DIFFERENCES that make a difference to what otherwise would be misunderstandable.
- 3) Highlight significant language similarities.

Questions used appear in these categories:  
 GEOLINGUISTIC DEMOGRAPHY  
 SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECTS AND CONSTRAINTS  
 LANGUAGE ARTS AND DEVELOPMENT  
 RESOURCES -- FOR ORIENTATION/INFORMATION  
 APPLICATIONS

References for the presentation include an EFIK (Nigeria) LanGram, and texts which suggest "which languages to learn...and how-to," as well representative references.

### Topic QUESTIONS for LanGrams

#### A. GEOLINGUISTIC DEMONGRAPHY

1. Specifically, WHO now uses this LANGUAGE -- by WHAT name?
  - a. Total numbers, and predominances: Male, Female, Age Levels, et al.
  - b. Distinctions in spoken and written variations -- by number, group.
2. WHERE and WHY?
  - a. Historical background, setting, circumstances helpful to understanding and using this LANGUAGE. Orientations of users: agriculture, industrial, artistic, progressive vs. traditional, etc.
  - b. Numerical acceptance (e.g. use of formal, colloquial) by PLACE: 1. Rural 2. Urban 3. Regional 4. National 5. Multi-national
3. What are the numerical and place relationships with other LANGUAGES?
  - a. What "trade" language relationships are current or tending?
  - b. To what extent do specified DIALECTS overlap with this LANGUAGE?
4. How BI-TRI-MULTI-lingual are which users of this language
 

Primary, secondary, tertiary, and lingua franca users, by place.

Other: (Other world-languages used in the areas, etc.)

## B. SOCIO-POLITICAL ASPECTS AND CONSTRAINTS

1. Political status and restrictions: policies, attitudes, laws?
  - a. Official uses, constraints [such as on import of other language texts, use in the media, etc.], censorship, other caveats.
  - b. Minorities and "rights," separatists and their influence.
2. Educational status and restrictions?
3. Economic influences and commercial factors with impact?
4. Religious groups use and impact -- who uses WHAT? (See A. above, also.)
5. Cultural circumstances and attitudes: at home, on "the street" and in society in general? (See also questions in APPLICATIONS, with cultural variations and special uses.) Convergence and divergence factors.
6. Literacy rate and results? (Other factors: fast-slow information-rate, etc.)
7. TRENDS for the above, and other pertinent correlative factors within this category and between it and others.

Other:

## C. LANGUAGE ARTS AND DEVELOPMENT [Uniqueness and Availability]\*\*

1. Orthography, script, sounds, systems (current, changes, trends)?
  - a. Alphabet or other script. Reading: Up, down; left to right, etc.
  - b. Variance from spoken to written. Levels of acceptability, style.
2. Extent and availability of written and spoken grammars in-print, glossaries, dictionaries (uni-, bi-, tri-lingual), other aids? Projected publications (soon to be available)?
3. Vocabulary development: technical, literary; borrowed vs. "purist."
4. In print or currently projected, or oral, scripture, literature, science, periodicals, entertainment press, folk-materials, etc.? What is "classic"?
5. Use of reproduction hardware (press, recording, illustrations, etc.)?
  - a. Printing and reproduction laws: local, imports; other restrictions.

- b. Facilities: type-set, litho, photocopy; note quality, availability. In-country: local, regional, international.
6. Stylistics: levels, classes, modes? Forms? Functions? [Contrastive]
- a. Discourse style and continuity.
  - b. Parts of speech, with unusual factors.
  - c. Change patterns, infixes, standards, etc.
  - d. Other grammatical modifiers: clauses, constructions.
  - e. Cases and their description.
  - f. Distinctions for person and number?
  - g. Genders and related factors.
  - h. Phonemes and their variances; tones and intonations.
  - i. Vowel, consonant, and other constructs.
  - j. Sounds uncommon when compared with world phonetics of major languages.
  - k. Structure: inflected, agglutinative, polysynthetic, monosyllabic, synthetic, analytic, isolating; interrelations, distinctions.
  - l. Favored: endocentric or exocentric constructions?
  - m. Favored: coordinated or subordinated phrases?
  - n. Verbs: distinctions of voice? Moods (Subjunctive, indicative, etc.) And tenses or aspects?
  - o. Forms of redundancy.
  - p. Sentence length abnormalities.
  - q. Modification slots used for adjectives; adverbs used as phrases.
  - r. Restrictions on sentence modifications?
  - s. Discourse shifts -- prominent, idiosyncratic. Their functions?
  - t. Pronouns and their markers (personal, possessive, demonstrative, interrogative, relative, indefinite): person, number, gender, case, inclusiveness/exclusiveness. Hierarchies of features?
  - u. Particular abstract terminology.
  - v. Specialized vocabularies (see Aginsky lists and Languetic Codebook).
  - w. Classes of nouns or verbs and their markings: usual, unusual.
  - x. Syntactical markers. (Subject-verb-object...or?)
  - y. Common borrowing, compounding, antimetonymy, extension, or derivation of developing new vocabulary and their markers.
  - z. Figures and modes of speech (direct, indirect, first or third person in the narrative, euphemisms) in levels and circumstances.

OTHER: (See Languetics Codebook, Language Indicators, including study of fallacious logic, etc.)

D. KEY RESOURCES (Double check for reliability, validity: what to avoid!)

- 1. PEOPLE who can help: bilinguals, tutors, specialists in translation and interpretation, genre-specialists. Note dialects, current work.

2. TEXTUAL: bilingual/bicultural dictionaries, grammars, other aids. Note Unesco and other UN terms lists and those used for specialties.
  3. INSTITUTIONS and ORGANIZATIONS which teach/share language info/methods: academic, societies/associations, commercial, embassies and governmental, and para-governmental (OAS, Unesco, etc.)
  4. SYSTEMS: Human Relations Area Files, Computer systems: Dialog, Orbit, etc.; and synthesis systems such as TSI: AscaTopics, etc.
- OTHER: (See also Languetics CODEBOOK and questions for CULTURGRAMS and other types of "Grams" from LIRC.)

#### E. APPLICATIONS

1. Orthography aids and examples (aids for writers, translators)
2. Culture-specific phrases + pronunciation + translation:
  - a. Politeness
  - b. Survival
  - c. Customs
  - d. Authority and class distinction terms, expressions
  - e. Economic, religious, intergroup, or other genre-specific.
  - f. Traditions (proverbs, word play, et al.)
  - g. Other KEY terms.
3. Non-verbal expressions favored by given people(s) in the culture.
4. Terms and non-verbal expressions to AVOID!
5. Other terms, clues, cues, codes, and caveats to help best USAGE.

OTHER:

- F. OTHER: Logic patterns, language-to-language transfer devices for translators and other message processors, nuances to look for, etc.

\*\*See Languetics CODEBOOK, pp. 96-112 for other categories. (Available from BYU/LIRC/Tyler, 240 B-34 BYU, Provo, UT 84602.)