
EDITORIAL

Summaries in Interlingua

WITH this issue of BLOOD, we inaugurate the policy of publishing summaries of the various articles in the new “supranational” language, Interlingua. Those of us who have occasion to peruse many foreign journals will realize how grateful one can be in finding the occasional English summaries, which give at a quick glance the gist of the article. Since BLOOD is widely read abroad, we have long felt that we were not serving our readers as well as we might by publishing articles and summaries in English alone. Granted that English has become increasingly universal in its scope, it is still difficult for many Latin-Americans or Frenchmen to scan through the summaries and decide quickly as to whether the article in question warrants his oft-times laborious study. The translation of summaries into one, two, or three other languages is becoming increasingly prevalent, but *which* languages? Our increasing awareness of Latin-America and its growing integration into the sphere of North American medical influence has led a number of journals to publish summaries in Spanish (cf. Radiology, Circulation); but what of the Brazilians who use Portuguese, or the Haitians and the many Canadians whose native tongue is French? Thus, when we were introduced to Interlingua through the medium of the translation of Science Service, we quickly seized on it as a very promising means by which the problem of “which language?” could be solved.

Interlingua is not the first of the international or supranational languages, but there are indications that it may well succeed where the others have failed. It is based on the concept developed chiefly by an Austrian, Julius Lott, and a Chilean surgeon, Alberto Liptay, that “the international language does not need to be invented. It exists. One only needs to collect all its words and set them in order.” With the Interlingua Division of Science Service and Dr. Alexander Gode of New York, the project was brought to its present fruition. As Dr. Gode says in a recent article: “Strictly speaking, the language is not *constructed* but *extracted*. It aims to be simultaneously French, English, Spanish, Italian, and so on,” each one of these languages streamlined according to a set plan. Since “Standard Average European,” a term used by Whorf,² is for all practical purposes the language of science, Interlingua attempts to extract and synthesize all the elements common in the various European languages into a logical, readily understandable new supranational tongue.

An Argentinian or other Spanish-American reading Interlingua scans through it very readily and is then taken aback by what appear to be slight errors in construction. A Brazilian and an Italian read the text with ease, recognize their own languages, but sense that something is awry. An Englishman or an American may have a little difficulty at first, unless he has had a fair amount of Latin or Spanish or Italian as a background. Actually, Interlingua is extracted and amalgamated out of Italian, French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese combined. For a word to be classified as international, it must be used in at least three of these language units, with German and Russian as possible substitutes. Thus to

all users of the various romance languages, including French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish, Interlingua should be read with ease. As the language develops, German, Russian, and the various Oriental languages will contribute to it as they did and will do to English and all the languages of the Romance group.

We understand that BLOOD is the first of the internationally read medical journals to publish abstracts in Interlingua. In this project, we have the active participation and cooperation of Dr. Gode and the Interlingua Division of Science Service. How great a degree of success will be achieved remains to be seen, and it is hoped that interested readers will record their opinions, for or against.

That barriers between nations and their various scientific groups are often abetted by the language barrier cannot be doubted. The development of a common international tongue such as Interlingua may not only aid in the means of communication between scientific groups, but in the gradual filtering down of the good-will engendered there to the masses of the people in general. We wish Interlingua success, therefore, not only in this limited sphere of our journal BLOOD, but in the world at large.

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REFERENCES

- ¹ GODE, ALEXANDER: The case for Interlingua. *Scient. Monthly* 77: 80, 1953.
- ² WHORF, B. L.: Four Articles on Metalinguistics. Washington, D. C., Foreign Service Institute, 1950.