

How to Be Impolite (or Worse) in an Artificial Auxiliary Language

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Artificial auxiliary languages such as Esperanto are instances of conscious linguistic engineering, but in many cases they also involve social engineering. The motive behind the creation of Esperanto and similar languages was to increase international understanding; we might therefore expect encouragement of positive messages in them and discouragement of negative or rude ones, either at an official or an unofficial level. An example of this is in Hogben's (1943) book on Interglossa: "The need for the strong imperative will be rare, except in history books. An international auxiliary of peaceful communication is not for generals or for conversation with the cat" (p. 106).

Some artificial languages go even further and attempt to make verbal impoliteness of one or more kinds impossible or at least unsuccessful. For example, according to Weilgart, in his language aUI the use of racial slurs will not work, as such words will be transparently subjective and subject to questioning.

However, just as speakers of artificial languages have not always followed the grammatical rules of these languages, sometimes the pragmatic and social prescriptions of artificial language creators have been violated by those who have used their languages. An extreme example of this is the Neue Deutsche Esperanto-Bewegung of the early 1930s, a pro-Nazi Esperanto organization. This paper will look at texts in various artificial languages to determine the extent to which rudeness and negative and hostile ideas (sometimes going against the rules or visions of language designers) occur in them, and how the languages are manipulated to express these ideas.

References

Hogben, L. (1943) *Interglossa*. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.

Weilgart, J. W. (1979) *aUI: The Language of Space* (4th edition). Cosmic Communication Co., Decorah, IA.