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Word Ways readers may be interested in the contents of the following letter recently received from the Division of Unusual Languages of the United States Coast Guard at Varna, N. Y. I quote it in full:

Your request for information (writes Lieutenant Commander Bothius C. Heminstitch, the Public Relations Officer of the Division) about SUPERL has been forwarded to me. I hope that you will not take offense because I have not used SUPERL in this letter; it has been a long-standing policy of this office to answer all requests in the language of the request.

As you probably already know, SUPERL is a language devised to replace all of the so-called 'natural' languages. It is streamlined and rationally designed, and has every advantage over the 'natural' languages.

SUPERL was developed by a team of U. S. Coast Guard linguists on an abandoned oil-rig off Santa Barbara. The Coast Guard sponsored this research and development project for obvious reasons having to do with inter-service funding. The project stretched over a period of six months, and resulted in Coast Guard Handbooks in SUPERL Grammar, SUPERL Phonology, and SUPERL Readers I and II. At present an exhaustive SUPERL Dictionary is under preparation. Over 500 centers for teaching SUPERL have been established, and it is already the official language of various government departments.

The advantages of SUPERL are many. Using it, speakers may talk directly in mathematics, physics, chemistry, spherical trigonometry, and anthropology, without the necessity of an intervening language. It, of course, makes direct conversion of the foot-pound-Fahrenheit system to the metric-centigrade system, thus relieving users of laborious and time-consuming computations. In its binary mode, SUPERL may be used directly with computers, bypassing any computer languages. With SUPERL a Thesaurus is unnecessary; an alphabetical listing is a Thesaurus. Thus real relationships of concepts are phonologically represented, and the unwholesome arbitrariness of phonetics which now plagues 'natural' languages.

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However, SUPERL is not without its critics. Grammatical truths about the so-called 'natural' languages are obvious advantages of the language (so to speak). All the facts about the coast guard are preserved. Thirty garrulous scholars and instructors say is recorded. We modestly propose the catalog of All Knowledge to scholars and government, with SUPERL lending a hand.

SUPERL shows a heightening of the so-called 'natural' languages. The silvery fingers of the computer (or fodder's) return (or be rejected). Is there any comparison between the works of Shakespeare and the cast of SUPERL? Is it expected to cast himself? We modestly propose the catalog of All Knowledge to scholars and government, with SUPERL lending a hand.

In spite of
The articulation of SUPERL involves additional facial muscles, so that it is impossible to say something illogical in SUPERL without at least a weak smile. Blatant absurdities result in broad grins and repeated winks.

However, while these are major advantages, they might be built into 'natural' languages. SUPERL has, in addition, two characteristics which no 'natural' language has: truth and compactness.

Grammatical utterances in SUPERL are always true. Thus, new truths about the universe can be discovered by babbling. This has obvious advantages. Speakers of SUPERL have at their tongue-tip (so to speak) the combined knowledge of mankind, and, what is more, all the facts about the universe that they will ever need. The Coast Guard is presently exploiting this characteristic in a unique project. Thirty garrulous people have been gathered in our laboratory in Peoria and instructed to talk about whatever interests them. What they say is recorded, and will be compiled into the SUPERL Encyclopedia. We modestly hope that ultimately this will be the Ultimate Compendium of All Knowledge. If it is declassified, it may prove of interest to scholars and teachers.

SUPERL is, in addition, amazingly compact. What may be a lengthy exegesis in a 'natural' language is often a simple sentence in SUPERL. A classic example of this is B.A. Booper's refutation of Stratificational Analysis. It was a single word! (The word also carried the meaning 'natural waste', but that is neither here nor there.) Whole novels have been written on the back of Howard Johnson menus. SUPERL lends itself quite naturally to poetry. For example,

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shows a height of lyricism not often attained in awkward natural languages. The approximate English translation is "As the moon casts slivery fingers (or greasy forks) over the spider's (or lampshade's, or fodder's) back, does he (or the moon) care, really care? I will return (or become nauseous) to my beloved (or the general public). Is there any other way? (or Do you have any oranges?)" The entire works of Shakespeare are being translated into SUPERL; the result is expected to be a single trilogy of plays. There may be some difficulties with actual production, for, as one writer observed, "The cast is large, but the soliloquies are short."

In spite of the many advantages of SUPERL, large numbers of
people still sullenly refuse to say anything in SUPERL. We guess that this may be the result of half-baked rumors and spurious opinions about SUPERL. It would be well to straighten out a few expressions of anti-SUPERL sentiment.

Some object because speakers seem to be unable to make jokes in SUPERL. This seems to be a rather pointless objection. Jokes have their place, but there are all sorts of practical jokes that don’t require any use of language at all. Let those who cite this as an objection stitch a friend’s trouser-legs together, or pour olive oil in their wives’ cocktail glasses. In any case, to satisfy these spoil-sports, we may point out that already a team of United States Coast Guard Transmogrificational Grammarians are already at work devising a set of standard jokes that may be recited in SUPERL.

That chimps seem to be able to learn SUPERL faster and better than human beings is not really an objection to the language, either. There is simply a difference between the brains of chimps and the brains of human beings. Vive la difference!

The rumor that a recent anthropological finding, an artifact, had no name in SUPERL and that proponents of SUPERL subsequently smashed and disposed of the artifact, has no truth in it. Speakers of SUPERL have tested this rumor by trying to repeat it in SUPERL. They were able to repeat the rumor, but only with broad grins and guffaws. Thus, even if true, the rumor had to be most illogical.

The most vicious rumor is that it is possible to say "The world is coming to an end soon" in SUPERL without even the hint of a smile. This we must simply discount. If the present trend of diversity in natural languages continues to pollute our linguistic atmosphere, we really are in for trouble. Let the anti-SUPERLites consider that, instead of carping at a minor inconsistency in SUPERL.

I hope I have given you the information you require. You may be amused to know that there are dirty words in SUPERL. However, in the interests of National Security, these words have been classified and may be used only by the highest echelons of the government and military.

Please write to me directly if you are in need of further information about SUPERL. I would also be grateful if you would forward to me the names of any you hear being critical of SUPERL. Please indicate in your report whether they are of draft age, or whether they are supported by any government monies.