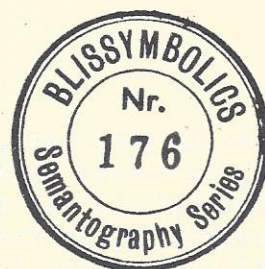


BLISS INSTITUTE

(Formerly Semantography Institute)

2 Vicar Street, Coogee
SYDNEY, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA
telephone FX 8140



SEMANTOGRAPHY, BASIC ENGLISH,

C. K. OGDEN AND I. A. RICHARDS.

Semantography Series No. 176.

During the first seven years of work on Semantography I nurtured the hope that the friends of an international language, be it Esperanto, Interglossa, Basic English or others will be interested in my work, I hoped that they would realise that Semantography cannot be spoken and is therefore no competitor to their languages. On the contrary, it may well be that pictorial symbols which are used mainly in the English word order would indeed prepare the way for people substituting the symbols by words in Esperanto or Basic English, etc., etc.

All my hopes were shattered. Indeed, I learned that my worst enemies, besides the orthodox linguists in the schools and the universities, are the linguists who advocate Esperanto, Basic and other systems. But in 1951 my hopes of co-operation were high, and so at last I wrote to C. K. Ogden, the author of Basic English. He and I. A. Richards appear as the authors of the book THE MEANING OF MEANING which has been hailed as a significant contribution to the science of Semantics. I hoped therefore that both would be greatly interested in the way I handled the semantic problem in Semantography. And so I wrote:

C. K. Ogden, Esq.
The Orthological Institute,
45 Gordon Square,
London W. C. 1.

13th January, 1951.

Dear Sir,

For a number of years I have wanted to write to you, but I always felt that my work was not yet ready for presentation. But now, after 8 years of work, and having gained the recognition of men like Bertrand Russell, Lancelot Hogben and others I dare to approach you.

You will quickly recognise that it is the first fulfillment of Leibniz's idea. Quotations in the attached brochure No. 6 referring to Leibniz (page 3) and to you (4) are taken from your famous book THE MEANING OF MEANING. I am approaching Professor I. A. Richards at the same time.

In various chapters of my voluminous work (3 books) I have mentioned your work, and said a number of times, that without your work, without your demonstration that extreme word economy is possible, I would never have attempted what I call Semantography.

I have been a fervent student of Basic English and I became aware of the opposition against Basic from English speaking people. I believe that my study has revealed the root of this opposition. At the same time, I believe that I have offered a simple remedy, which should find your approval and should greatly help Basic. I have devoted a complete chapter to this study of Basic.

I have no financial assistance, and therefore I offer you my extensive work, hoping that you will acquire it for your library. Please read the recommendation of John Metcalfe (letter attached) who is this city's foremost advocate of Basic English. Read the reference to you by your colleague Chapman (p. 14 of the brochure) and read the words of Bertrand Russell, and his appeal to all good men. I hope that he and I shall not appeal to you in vain, and I am looking forward to your letter.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. BLISS.

I was happy to receive an order for ^{the} 3 books, but learned later that C. K. Ogden did not give the order, but one of his co-workers.

Dear Mr. Ogden,

31st March, 1951.

I have arranged that the three volumes should be sent to you, and you should have them within a few days after the receipt of this letter. Should this not be the case kindly claim the books from Theatre Tickets & Messenger, 100 Martin Street, London, W. C. 2. Telephone Temple Bar 1023.

I want to write you a long letter and pour out in it all what I wanted to say to you throughout the last 8½ years. However, right now I am very much pressed because the Sydney University has sponsored a Lecture before the Professors and Students, and I am

preparing pamphlets, posters, lantern slides and a mass of letters, and beg you, therefore, to accept this short letter. In my lecture, I want to show line of symbols for an international science abstract, the second line in English at Anglo-American Universities, in French at French Universities, etc., etc. My idea was that Basic English should be the English medium. However, it didn't work, and you know why. If I depict a hammer, I must be free to say "I hammer". In short, the free use of the verb is necessary. And my proposal has been put down in a "Hyphenated Basic Word List." I don't need to tell you more, but I am going to send you this word list with more comments. I shall send you also the Index of my work, and you will find Basic English under page 37 b. 43, 55, 81, 222, 341, 611, and Ogden under 3, 37b. 43, 44, 48, 65, 81, 83, 124, 169, 191, 222, 436, 469, 528,. However, the chapter which is advertised on page 222 as being in the third book, is not there. The whole work got so overgrown that I had to curtail it, and what I want to say in the third book, you will findⁱⁿ the short chapter beginning on page 222. I beg you, therefore, to read first the foregoing chapter, "Energy-Mass, the Dual Aspect in Language". There you will find the explanation of my approach to Basic English which is the approach of the physicists.

More than a quarter of a century has passed, and you are now able to look back on a successful work. Basic English is today recognised as a creative tool. Nevertheless, you know more than I, the opposition which Basic English has to face, and I myself have witnessed the complete breakdown of a Basic English school among immigrants, for whom the knowledge of English was a necessity. In my opinion the cause was only the forced round-about way. But, if we divide the Basic words by a hyphen as for instance, in "advertise-ment," and "knowledge" and "mix-ed" etc. etc. etc. we could say I advertise, I know and I mix.

Not more for today, and please believe me that I have the greatest desire that Basic English and Semantography should complement each other in a new mode of communication.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. BLISS.

In addition I sent him the leaflets and papers I had at that time. At last a letter came from Ogden which was perplexing to say the least. Indeed, I could not understand how a man, who is apparently high above the mediocre type of intellectual, could quibble about such meaningless details. Only seven years later did I find out the reason. Here is Ogden's letter to me.

Dear Mr. Bliss,

August 6th, 1951.

I returned to London today and found your letter of March 31st, which this to acknowledge though I cannot deal with the points you mentioned, as I am leaving again tomorrow for some weeks.

Meanwhile the three volumes (not ordered by me, though certain books have to be ordered in my name, because of postal regulations etc.) have arrived and I gather the adjustment on the charge has been made. I have only been able to glance at them, and you have certainly taken an optimistic job, in which I can only wish you the luck you hope for.

I might in one case be able to help you get your facts and references right. I noted for example, that you describe me as a "semanticist" (Heaven forbid) and not as C.K. Ogden (Do you call H.G. Wells, "Herbert G. Wells" and G.K. Cheserton, Gilbert K. Cheserton), as if I were an American, and my friend Sir Richard Paget, becomes a physicist. Why? and appears more than once as Robert. Another public figure Leonard Woolfe, appears as if he was a German. Where do you get your figure of 30,000 - 50,000 for cave pictures: of animals from, let alone "pictorial" writing? I see you quote a book by one Rundle as "highly illuminating" but you should know that as regards Basic, it is based upon statements of a book which had to be withdrawn.

(Incidentally you must not duplicate the basic word list for the purposes of a Hyphenated List. It is fully protected against that sort of use and it might get you into trouble, which I would regret so please don't misunderstand a friendly warning.)

I do of course, disagree with everything you say in criticising Basic, as well as the reasons alleged; but it would be a long story and it is your funeral if you rely on evidence of "failure" for one citation. (What was the text book used?) or from "opposition" from something you have read. (I would like to hear more about this, because it does not make sense over here.

Referring to the previous correspondence with Miss Lockhart (Feb. 11, 1949), I see she asked you to verify a quotation (a thousand million "of people") before using it. Did you do so??? I don't know where you got it from, though you attribute it to me in Vol. III p. 81, No. 29. is not by me. Most of our books are still out of print, and I gather you haven't seen more than 10% of what would be relevant, which makes it hard to begin----

But when I hear from you again, I might have a better idea.

Yours sincerely,
C. K. Ogden.

Perhaps I may explain to the reader the trivialities which have incensed Mr. Ogden. He is the author of the MEANING OF MEANING, so he has done something in the field of semantics. How great is my sin then for calling him a semanticist? I referred to him many times as C.K.Ogden. Only once did I write Charles K. Ogden, because this name I read in an article on Basic English in The Sydney Morning Herald. Have I made him an American really and truly by spelling his first Christian name. Is this the meaning of meaning of being an American? True enough, by some mistake, I wrote a few times Robert Paget, instead of Richard Paget, but I usually wrote Richard Paget. So what? I corresponded with Paget but he never found it worthwhile to correct the few mistakes I made with regard to his Christian name. It's too trivial to waste a line on it. Paget is a fellow of the Physical Society. He had conducted experiments on sounds and speech. I called him therefore a "physicist". So what? What is the terrible mistake I have made? Another mistake I have made is to write Leonard Woolf as Leonhard Woolf. Have I made him thus a German? As to the 30,000 - 50,000 years of paleolithic cave paintings, this is the figure arrived at by many archeologists. He is incensed by some critique by Mr. Rundle. He is most worried whether I have corrected the words "athousand million of people."

As to the criticism of Basic English I refer the reader to my books (page Nos. in previous letter.) I have seen the failure of Basic English in Shanghai. 16,000 European refugees realised that the learning of English meant survival in Shanghai. Consequently they were drawn into the School for Basic English by a Mr. Kars who told them that they need only learn 850 words. But when they realised that they must not say "I know", but "I have knowledge", not "I hammer" but, "I am hammering" not "I smile" but "I give a smile" they gave Basic English up for good. Today writing these sheets 40 years have passed since Basic English attracted the world with its phantastic claim "There are no verbs in Basic English" (a lie which I have exposed in my books and the issue No. 47) Basic English seems to be dead for good. Indeed the last claim I heard is, that it is only a method to learn English for Beginners - the real English not the round-about Basic.

A few years ago I read an article in LIFE INTERNATIONAL which appeared after the death of C. K. Ogden. It disclosed that he was a great excentric, going to the silliest length to do some of the silliest things, for instance advocating and carrying out a change of underwear of the mummified body of the philosopher Jeremy Bentham. Now I understood his silly remarks to the trivialities to which objected in my book.

At the same time I wrote to Ogden, I wrote also to A. I. Richards who was in 1951 a professor at Harvard. And I received an order for my 3 books but he did not find it necessary to reply to my letter nor to say something about my work.

And so another hope for fruitful cooperation in communication of the human race collapsed.

I still believe that the work done in the last 40 years for Basic can be useful in bringing about the realization that the best international auxiliary language which can and should be established is not Esperanto, but English. It is already spoken by hundreds of millions of people, about 50% of all publications are in English, and English is the international language used in Asia and Africa. It happened many a time that delegates from different parts of China or India were unable to converse in their native tongues which differ from province to province. But most of them knew enough of English in order to make it the de facto language of their congress and correspondence.

What is necessary is a simplification of English. I refer to Model English by Prof. Dodd of the University of Washington, Seattle, who bases his vocabulary on Basic, but removes the round-about way of Basic. Of course, Prof. Dodd is not a professional linguist. He is a professor of sociology, and this explains why he could not find any recognition among his colleagues of the language departments. They and they only are responsible for any improvement and alteration in English, but they have refused to sanction any simplification and regularity in the rules for centuries. They are to be blamed first and foremost for the jungle growth which represent the languages of today.

The reader interested in a simplification of English is referred to my Book II p.222 titled "The Secret of Secrets of Basic English", also to S.S. No. 47, and the issue referring to Prof. Dodd's Model English (not yet printed when this issue is being completed. For the issue number see the catalog of the whole Semantography Series).

The End.