The relative importance of content-oriented teaching materials in German universities and public schools is examined in this survey of language textbooks and teaching methods. It is noted that despite a growing interest in structural linguistics at the university level, school grammars are primarily content-oriented and based on Hans Glinz's "The Inner Form of German." Teacher training in the methodology of grammar instruction largely takes place after the student leaves the university with the assistance of master teachers. (RL)
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Lecture on
"The teaching of German in German schools and current trends in linguistics in German universities"

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German grammar books, be they intended for use in elementary - or in high schools, can throughout be characterised by the term "inhalt-bezogen" which means content-oriented. Both term and idea either refer explicitly to Leo Weisgerber's Language Philosophy (1) or they announce his influence in their use of a certain terminology dependent on his theory.

According to Weisgerber, language is not so much a structured object lending itself to a formal description, but more an expression for and an image of the World as it is formed in the speaker's mind. Language for Weisgerber is the interpretation of the world by a community speaking the same language. This theory has consequences for the approach to language analysis:

(1) subject of linguistic research is a language community and naturally also has to be the investigator's native tongue, because he thinks in the categories of this language;

(2) not a formal structure of this language is being observed but the question is focused on how this language interprets World, and what it can accomplish for the interpretation of World.

Let me quote only two of Weisgerber's terms to illustrate his theory: language is "das Worten der Welt" (2) - "The Wording of the World"; and the content-orientation is expressed by the programmatic question "How effective can a specific singular language illustrate how words grip reality, how extralinguistic facts are being verbalised" (3) (Zugriff).

The primarily content-oriented argumentation is more than obvious.

Turning from language philosophy to its practical application, we have to mention three scholars who took the part of the mediator between theory and practice, between the university and school grammar teaching. I am referring to Glinz, Brinkmann, and Erben. All the three deviate more or less from Weisgerber's theory concerning the status of language in the process of thought. But they agree in so far as they also see the main function of grammar in its task to show the capacity and effectiveness of a language with regard to content.

It is, however, only fair to dwell shortly on a historical aspect. In this respect, the content-oriented grammar of Weisgerber and his followers can be justified. For, in spite of a number of short-comings and a certain one-sidedness of their conception they have influenced German historical linguistics rather positively. Their demand to conceive
language as a content unity has ended the period of the atomistic approach to language, has ended the mere punctual pursuit of isolated phenomena in the history of language (4).

I would prefer to explain the mediator's position with a description of their own grammar conceptions. For, to present you a tedious survey of the respective parts in the grammar books which German children have to use would take up too much of our time and would lead to exactly the same confusion in which present grammar teaching to a great deal is involved.

Hans Glinz's "The Inner Form of German" (5) (Die Innere Form des Deutschen) was first published in 1952. Glinz starts with the assumption that the whole text being superior to its elements has to be the starting-point of analysis. He then proceeds to sentences, and finally to words, of which the finite verb is considered the kernel of the sentence, its leading part (6) (Leitglied). From there he investigates clauses and word classes in order to analyse their relationship. He is out to - in his own words - "describe and explain the interaction of units bearing meaning" (7) ("das Spiel der sinn-tragenden Einheit zu beschreiben und zu deuten").

In the process of explanation, Glinz uses a grammatical and philosophical terminology which in its tendency was initiated by Weisgerber. It is the attempt to give descriptive terms which contain a definition as well as a functional explication of grammatical facts.

Thus, also terms deriving from Latin are being expressed descriptively in German:

the subject becomes the basic quantity - Grundgrösse (8);
the direct object the target quantity - Zielgrösse (9);
conjunctions are links joining disjunctive parts - Spannfügeteile (10).

If you allow me a brief digression, one is tempted to give quotations in full translation. The terminology of the scholars I am referring to, however, becomes under the constraint of descriptiveness an almost metaphoric set, that is, even a German native speaker has to translate the terminology into common linguistic terms.

One example should suffice: one of Glinz's definitions of sentences reads "eine Einheit des stimmlichen Hinsetzens" (11) which is literally translated by "a unit of vocal placing" and in this form makes little sense. The understanding, however, is: that a sentence is described as a set of intonation markers, which is closed in by pauses. With such an interpretation, one finds the definition to be based on a rather mechanistic view.
I have to repeat that Glinz's grammar conception has had a great influence on school grammars and dominates up to the present (12). Reasons to account for this fact may be that:

(1) There was no alternative between 1952 and 1958 when Erben's work was published, or 1962 when Brinkmann's grammar was printed;

(2) the authors of school grammar books did not only reach for Glinz's "Inner Form" because it was the first systematical presentation after the war, but more so, in my understanding, because the organisation of this grammar corresponded with the intentions of the German didacticians (13):

(a) The teaching of German in German schools was and is in the first place based on the teaching of literature, and Glinz explicates his grammar with a full paragraph from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.

and to give another argument:

(b) the study of literature is understood as the study of exceptional language phenomena, respectively the study of stylistic subleties – Glinz's effectiveness-model suited this apprehension well.

and finally:

(c) to send pupils on discovery teachers believe Glinz to meet their expectation how to motivate when he suggests to start out from the text as a content unity which in any case and generally is understood before analysis, and then goes on with recitation of the text to find intonation units, syntactic clauses, and word-classes, and finally he ends with the problem of declension.

If authority should count for the order of mentioning, we should now look at Brinkmann's "The German Language, Its Form and Effectiveness" (Die deutsche Sprache. Ihre Form und Leistung) (14), published in 1962. Brinkmann – compared to Glinz – proceeds in the opposite manner. He does not start with the text as a whole, but with one of its elements in concreto: the noun. All the other elements of language he considers a "World of forms relating the noun" (15). It would be tempting to call this approach structural if not (as with Glinz) in the foreground there were the question: "What part do the respective grammatical elements play in the verbal interpretation of the world? - or, what perception of the world can we deduct from the observation of the interaction
of the elements?" (16). Brinkmann indulges in the descriptions of details which he considers to be all equal to each other instead of differentiating between categorical and sub-categorical factors.

I shall now turn to our third source of information, Johannes Erben. His "Summary of German Grammar" (17) (Abriss der deutschen Grammatik) is, like the other two, content-oriented. He also investigates the effectiveness of the German language. But in contrast to Glinz and Brinkmann, he first organises his grammar inductively, proceeding from smaller to larger elements (from phonemes to words etc.) and, secondly, does not only describe the effectiveness of the language but tries to classify those functions that lead to effectiveness and to summarise them in a system of basic patterns. His intention might be sufficiently reflected in this quotation: "The functional units, words, and sentences, are to be described with regard to structure and effectiveness" (18).

Erben accepts only those groups of words as classes of words which have a specific, and always the same function in a sentence, that is, ultimately only those which bear categorical functions in the language. He distinguishes five such classes, and, like his colleagues, applies a descriptive terminology:

- the verb is the Aussagewort - statement word (19);
- the noun is the Nennwort - naming word (20);
- adjectives and adverbs are Beiwörter - ad-words (21);
- pronouns are Formwörter - form words (22);
- and prepositions resp. conjunctions are Fügewörter - joining words (23).

Like Glinz he stresses that the central-position in a sentence is occupied by the predicate.

He observes the position of the verb in a sentence and develops basic patterns of German sentences. He emphasises that phrases are dependent on predicates ("Wertigkeit der Verben" (24) and that a dependency indicator of a verb is determinant for the sentence pattern it belongs to.

Erben's influence on school grammars is rather low (25). Maybe, because he refrained from a far too much differentiated description of the German language and limited himself to the description of its basic functions.

With this, I would like to leave the discussion of the theoretical basis of school grammars and give you a survey of the training of German teachers in this field.
The German high school teacher gets - no matter which subject is his major - almost no training in didactics at all during his studies at the university. Only after the final examination and while already practice teaching - during the "Referendarzeit" - he gets courses preparing him for teaching. The intensity of this instruction varies from one federal State to the other. It is not uniformly organised because - as you might recall - the Federal Republic of Germany has no central Ministry of Education. With the monthly meeting committee of the Education Ministers of the States, a first attempt towards mutual adjustment in educational and cultural matters is being made.

The preparatory didactic courses are held mainly by experienced teachers who, in most of the cases, have no longer direct contact with the universities. This means, provocatively speaking with regard to our topic, that the young teacher is being trained and practises in the grammar teaching methods of a past generation. He learns to use the tools of old methods in school. In order to illustrate the situation I give a quote from one of the standard-handbooks which accompany the young teacher after he left university. This book has the title: Methoden des Deutsch-Ubersetzens (26) (Methods of German teaching) and the illustrated quote reads: "the richness of language must not be cut up into pieces - or, to give another quotation: "the language ought to remain dynamic as a whole" (28). It is obvious that here we have the declared action of structuralism.

One is therefore surprised to find Manfred Bierwisch - who works in the field of generative grammar - quoted in the latest edition of the same book. The author mentions Bierwisch in a referential note, recommends his work for the general introduction into modern grammar theories but takes no notice of structuralism in her own book (29).

In the same work, an interrelation between the teaching of German and the teaching of foreign languages is also explicitly rejected: "It is not the business of the instruction in German to provide the grammatical schools for foreign-language-teaching, since they - abstracted and schematised in such a way - will be no longer right for one's own language and for the foreign language, too" (30).

Because of the just illustrated situation it is impossible to get new insights directly from the universities into schools.

Any connection between schools and universities in the didactic fields depends on pure chance and therefore is neither manageable nor even calculable. This deficiency is known since long, but it will take at least years before any changes to the better can be expected.
Those few words should suffice to describe the situation of the schools which ignore the results of recent linguistic research. Let me turn now to the situation at the universities.

As we have seen, the content-oriented grammar has substituted the historical-oriented grammar as far as a synchronic description of modern German is concerned. During the recent years, the newer approaches of structural grammar have been integrated in the teachings at some universities. You will be surprised to hear that - apart, perhaps, from Berlin and Stuttgart - the most recent grammar theories are being represented by historical philologists. There seems to be an unwritten law according to which teachers concerned with German literature of the Middle Ages are also obliged to teach modern synchronic linguistics, and this for no other reason than because they formerly have studied and taught grammar out of a historical interest. Professors who work in the field of modern literature usually do not have to take over a course in grammar. On the other hand, it is not at all out of the way that a student who is writing his thesis on the structure of present-day headlines in newspapers, for example, has to turn to the professor of medieval German literature.

This paradox situation leads to the result that a student is confronted with grammar theories rather often, but rarely he gets instruction to apply them to his mother-tongue. And especially the student who will be working in schools as a teacher later on would need new tools for the application of the theory so necessarily, since he will be the one who - as a teacher - has to deal with the present-day usage of the language almost exclusively.

The fact that hardly any mediation between grammar theory and its practical application to modern German is being observed at the universities might be another reason for the bars modern grammar theory finds on its way into schools. This problem, however, gets more and more attention in the universities, and there are a number of journals in which linguistic scholars publish their research material in a didactically revised form in order to make it useful and applicable for school lessons.

I would like to call your attention again to the situation of linguistic research at the universities in order to show what trends indicate a new approach in linguistic studies.

A rough division indicates the following current trends:

(1) the content-oriented grammar is being continued and developed further by Glinz (Aachen) (34);
(2) the generative grammar is being adjusted to the German language and developed further at the universities of Stuttgart and Berlin (35);

(3) Heidelberg concentrates on the development of the Dependency Theory (36), which was first elaborated by Tesnière (37). There - research is connected with a more detailed precision of the distinction between the content level and the expression level of language. A similar endeavour is undertaken in Leipzig by Professor Helbig (38);

(4) Other people are working on suggestions for a description of universal semantic structures which are seen as the formal links for translation from one language into another (Coseriu, Tübingen; Brekle, Regensburg, for example).

(5) A more extensive research project, suggested by the representatives of the Goethe-Institut some years ago, is occupied with the development of basic structures of German. This work is done by the teams in the Institut für deutsche Sprache in Mannheim. For this purpose a corpus which consists of fictional writing, popular scientific works, and newspaper articles was collected. The research group of this Institute in Freiburg - under the supervision of Professor Steger - analyses a corpus of present day spoken German. The two corpora provide the material for performance analyses with the eventual goal to give structural descriptions of various speech levels based on the empiric material.

I am sure I do not have to expound on the developments in content-oriented grammar any longer. A recently published concise grammar by Glinz does not essentially go further than the "Inner Form" (39): and I am sure the continuation and progressions in the field of transformational generative grammar, the very important publications of the East-Berlin Workshop of Structural Grammar are also internationally known (40).

I would like to limit the description of the remaining groups to those, that deal with schools and foreign-language-teaching, or to those, at least, which show the tendency to reflect the didactic side of our topic.
There are first to mention Gerhard Helbig and Wolfgang Schenkel. They recently published a dictionary of verbs which is explicitly explaining the dependency and distribution of German verbs and is meant for the use of foreign language teaching. They list about 300 German verbs under the aspect that each verb requires a specific number and kind of supplements. Those are divided into obligatory, optional, and a third class of free supplements. Only the number of obligatory supplements is counted as the dependency indicator of the verb. In addition, their dictionary informs the user, which syntactical position is taken by a supplement and how it is semantically restricted.

To give an example: the verb *achten* gets the dependency indicator 2, because the minimal correct information given in a sentence with this verb is "Der Lehrer achtet den Schüler" (the teacher respects the student). The first position is taken up by a noun in the nominative which can be of human or abstract origin. The second one also has to be filled by a noun with the same semantic restrictions and gets the additional restriction direct object.

Helbig and Schenkel first give an informative introduction into the history and theory of their verb-list, but the verb-list itself still lacks a certain theoretical and practical precision so that it cannot yet be fully accepted.

In Heidelberg, Hans-Jürgen Heringer has undertaken the attempt to relate the generative grammar to the dependency grammar. He developed a theory of the syntax of German which he published several times for various purposes. Since these papers always were focused on different target groups (students or teachers for example), it can be expected that it will be discussed more extensively in school circles. Furthermore, his theory is related to school grammar in that it takes up and develops an approach which we have already seen in Erben's and Glinz's works.

Heringer defines the sentence as "the smallest potentially independent utterance of a language". He tries to limit his definition within the grammaticality of sentences and disregards their semantic and logic acceptability. Substitution tests help him to define the positions which have to be filled with respective elements. He calls this procedure "commutation test". As with Erben and Helbig/Schenkel, the verb in the position of the predicate is given obligatory and free supplements ("Ergänzungen und Angaben") (45). They stand in a definite syntactic relation to the predicate, and, within a sentence chain, take up a definite position. Heringer's supplements correspond essentially with the objects in the traditional grammar. But with his position - and concatenation rules he attempts to formalise grammar totally. He continues the development of the
content-oriented grammar taking up the partly structural approach there, and he tries to arrive at precise rules for the description of German. He rejects Chomsky's binary model (46) of language description because he thinks it more important to concentrate on semantic dependencies. As a consequence, he needs much less operations to fully describe a sentence. Therefore, his model is suited better for grammar teaching in schools. But whether his model is also adequate as a structural basis of language teaching for foreigners remains to be proved.

Another topic of recent research is the problem of translation. To pose the problem in a somewhat simple manner, the question was: how can contrastive grammar reduce interferences to the "meaning" intended in both languages? Nickel has pointed out that interferences cannot be abstracted by the mere confrontation of two languages (47). If one argues on the basis of generative grammar as he does, one needs a theory of competence. Coseriu also demands a "tertium comparationis" for the comparison of two languages. This "tertium comparationis" should be identical with the meaning of the corresponding sentences in the two languages. He distinguishes syntactical and categorical meaning (48) and assumes stylistic variants on the syntactical level. These variants are identical in their categorical meaning.

This requires from any grammar that it should not only give devices that one can say this or that, but it should give rules, when one has to say this or that in other words: what usage is adequate to a specific situation? (49).

Coseriu believes that transference from one language into another could only be realised through empirical universal structures. These empirical universal structures are "everything that has been empirically found in the up to now observed languages and is shared by all of them" (50). He gives reasons for this definition. "If the empirical universal structure seems to fall together with the universals themselves, then they do so only, because there IS indeed something universal, but we are not yet able to give reasonable proof for it" (51).

It is, by the way, fascinating to imagine that these abstract theoretical thoughts which occupy contemporary linguistic research, seem to have been anticipated by grammarians centuries ago. The Grammaire générale et raisonnée (Grammaire de Port-Royal) from 1660 and James Harris' Grammar from 1751 with the title "Hermes or the Philosophical inquiry concerning language and universal grammar" indicate - as Brekle points out - an approach towards this general theory of grammar (52).
May I finally ask your permission, after having forced your attention to the more and more abstract levels of grammar theory, to lead you back to more concrete materials which — to my opinion — unjustifiably have been neglected during a period of concentration on the development of structural grammar, that is back to the analysis of larger text corpora.

In this connection, I am speaking pro domo. Professor Steger is the director of a research project which is supposed to collect a corpus of present-day spoken language. This corpus will be subject to grammatical analysis.

We intend to have a corpus of about 600,000 words. The material is being collected according to following criteria:

1. we insist on relatively standard speech, approximately a manner of articulation which is commonly accepted;

2. the recordings may not be simulated, i.e. artificially composed.

Our corpus is organised following extralinguistic criteria:

1. we differentiate according to those habitual rules which are commonly accepted by the speakers taking part in the various speech situations;

2. we roughly classify these speech situations as public, semi-public, non-public, and private.

We expect to be able to describe with our model the differing speech levels and their corresponding situations. To be more precise, we aim at a syntactic description of these levels.

We also assume that grammar cannot only be described as a system with certain variants, but that a systematic description has to include the situations in which these variants are preferred or even required. In addition, we give questionnaires to informants in order to get empirical material of those speech situations in which members of certain target groups frequently find themselves. This could some day be a possible way to rationalise the teaching of German as a foreign language and to lead to a more precise selection of the material to be taught.

It might also be interesting to attempt the transference of genuine spoken language into teaching material, which in textbooks one still finds only fictionally composed (53).
Let me now end this survey on the theory and application of grammar in German universities and schools. To sum up the main streams again, one can say:

(1) school grammars are content-oriented, they mainly base on Glinz;

(2) the university provides hardly any didactic training for the teaching of grammar;

(3) teachers are didactically trained outside the university and after their studies, they are trained by experienced people with no connection with the university any more;

(4) linguistics at the university is still part of the departments of historical linguistics, and there is only a loose connection to modern literary departments.

The situation of linguistics at the university is such that:

(a) we find more and more structural grammar being taught;

(b) university members try intensively to break the monopoly of the content-oriented grammar in the schools. Up to the present, however, they have no direct influence on school teaching;

(c) current research is mainly restricted to the description of isolated sentences;

(d) some scholars demand the conception of a universal grammar or, at least, a theory which makes it possible to describe transference operations between two languages;

(e) performance, respectively "parole" analysis, based on corpora, are rarely being undertaken yet.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

(1) Cf. Weisgerber, Leo: Muttersprache und Geistesbildung, 1929; and
Die vier Stufen in der Erforschung der Sprache, Düsseldorf 1963.

(2) Cf. for example Weisgerber, Leo: Die vier Stufen in der Erforschung der Sprache, Düsseldorf 1963.


(4) Results of this new period are to be seen for example in the works of:
Trier, Jost: Der deutsche Wortschatz im Sinnbezirk des Verstandes, Trier 1931; and
Porzig, Walter: Das Wunder der Sprache, Bern 1950.

(5) Glinz, Hans: Die innere Form des Deutschen (= Bibliotheca Germanica (4), Bern 1952.)

(6) Die innere Form des Deutschen, page 96.


(8) Die innere Form des Deutschen, page 133; page 158.

(9) Die innere Form des Deutschen, page 76.

(12) Cf. the following school grammar books:
Deutscher Sprachspiegel, Hefte 1-4, Düsseldorf 1964 and 1966;
Wort und Sinn, Sprachbuch Heft 1, 1966.


(15) Die deutsche Sprache, page 5 "Formenwelt, die auf das Substantiv bezogen ist".

(17) Erben, Johannes: Abriss der deutschen Grammatik, Darmstadt 61963.


(19) Erben, Johannes: Abriss der deutschen Grammatik, Darmstadt 61963.

(24) Abriss, page 266.

(25) After all his terminology has been adapted by some school grammars.


(27) Methodik des Deutschunterrichts, page 85. "Die Mülle des Sprachlichen darf nicht schematisiert, in Lernstoffe zerlegt werden".

(28) Methodik des Deutschunterrichts, page 86 "Die lebendige Sprachwirklichkeit soll im ganzen wirksam bleiben".

(29) Cf. Methodik des Deutschunterrichts, literature quoted on page 86.

(30) Methodik des Deutschunterrichts, page 87 "Es ist nicht Aufgabe des Deutschunterrichts, für den Fremd-sprachen-Unterricht das 'grammatische Rüstzeug' mitzugeben, da dieses - so abgezogen und schematisiert - weder für die eigene noch für die fremde Sprache mehr stimmt."

(31) There are departments of linguistics integrated in the philosophical faculty.


(33) Cf. the following new edited journals: Linguistik und Didaktik, Bayerischer Schulbuch Verlag, München Diskussion Deutsch, Diesterweg-Verlag, Frankfurt/Main;

or the following essays:

(34) His latest publication is:

(35) Cf. the publications of Klaus Baumgärtner and the publications of the "Arbeitsstelle für strukturelle Grammatik" East-Berlin.

(36) Cf. Heringer, Hans-Jürgen: Théorie der deutschen Syntax, München 1970; and


(39) Cf. note 34.


(41) Cf. note 38.


(43) Heringer, Hans-Jürgen: Théorie der deutschen Syntax, München 1970; and
Deutsche Syntax (Sammlung Göschel, Volumes 1246/1246a), Berlin 1970; and

Helbig-Schenkel: Wörterbuch zur Valenz und Distribution
deutscher Verben, page 38 ff. - "obligatorische Mitspieler" and "fakultative Mitspieler".

(46) Theorie der deutschen Syntax (Heringer), page 21 ff.

(47) Nickel, Gerhard: Welche Grammatik für den Fremdsprachen-
unterricht? in: Praxis des neusprachlichen Unterrichts,

(48) Coseriu, Eugenio: Über Leistung und Grenzen der
kontrastiven Grammatik, page 19, in:
Probleme der kontrastiven Grammatik (= Sprache der

(49) Coseriu (Kontrastive Grammatik), page 27.

(50) Coseriu, page 30 - "das, was in allen bisher untersuchten
Sprachen (oder auch nur in den meisten von ihnen) empirisch
festgestellt worden ist".

(51) Coseriu, page 31 - "Wenn das empirisch Allgemeine mit dem
Universellen zusammenzufallen scheint, so nur deshalb,
weil es sich in Wirklichkeit um etwas Universelles
handelt, dessen begriffliche Begründung uns im Augenblick
noch entgeht."

(52) Brekle, Herbert Ernst: Allgemeine Grammatik und
Sprachunterricht, in: Linguistik und Didaktik 1/1970,
pages 48-55.

(53) Cf. the various editions in this field by "Max Hueber Verlag",
München.