

Dwight L. Bolinger, 84, Authority In English and Spanish Languages

By **BRUCE LAMBERT**

Dwight L. Bolinger, a prominent English linguistic expert and scholar of the Spanish language, died Feb. 23 at Stanford University Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif. He was 84 years old and resided in Palo Alto.

Dr. Bolinger died of cancer, his family said.

He had served as president of the Linguistic Society of America, the Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States and the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese.

A keen observer of language in everyday use, he carried a notepad to jot down snippets of speech he heard. He found that the era of radio and television, modern bureaucracy and technical jargon greatly accelerated changes in usage, often blurring the definitions of words and fracturing the grammatical rules of the purists.

As a guest author of the "On Language" column in The New York Times Magazine, he wrote, "While newscasters may correct their mistakes, that does not erase them from the ear." He mused that if traditional English continued its rapid mutation, "translators will be needed" and universities will treat it "as a classical language."

'No Licensed Practitioners'

In his book "Language: The Loaded Weapon" (Longman, 1980), Dr. Bolinger said, "In language there are no licensed practitioners, but the woods are full of midwives, herbalists, colonic irrigationists, bonesetters and general-purpose witch doctors."

At the time of his death he was the joint chairman of the honorary editorial advisory board of "The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics," to be published this year by Pergamon

Press and the University of Aberdeen Press.

He wrote 15 published books on English and Spanish and his other special interests: accent and intonation. He also published more than 300 journal articles, mostly on linguistics and Spanish.

Originally interested in music composition, he developed his interest in language by chance, while working his way through Washburn College in his native Topeka, Kan. He sold suits door-to-door in the Mexican-American neighborhoods of Topeka, requiring him to learn Spanish. He studied it at college as well and went on to get a master's degree in Spanish from the University of Kansas in 1932 and a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin in 1936.

Varied Teaching Career

He taught at the University of Wisconsin, Kansas City) Junior College, Colegio de San Luis in Cartago, Costa Rica, Washburn, the University of Southern California, the University of Colorado and Harvard University, where he retired in 1973. Since 1978 he had been a visiting professor at Stanford.

He held fellowships from Yale University, Bell Telephone's Haskins Laboratories and the Center for Advanced Studies of the Behavioral Sciences. He won the Orwell Award from the National Council of Teachers of English.

His wife, Louise, died in 1986. He is survived by a son, Bruce, of Nevada City, Calif.; a daughter, Ann McClure of Aberdeen, Scotland; a sister, Mary Barker of Red Bluff, Calif.; a brother, William, of Versailles, Mo., and three grandchildren.