

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

International Language (known as Esperanto) Commission, Interministerial Decree April 29/October 5 1993

STUDY¹

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The data on foreign language instruction, even in its recent introduction at the elementary schools, demonstrate that such instruction risks becoming, shortly, teaching/learning of the English language. As is revealed in the report "Monitoring Initiative of Elementary School Reform" of the MPI (p. 6), 73% of the classes in which L2 instruction has begun have chosen English.

The initiatives, technical as well, to avoid such a reductive and dangerous vision of teaching/learning foreign languages have been worth little or nothing.

Beyond the difficultly solved employment problems for teachers of other languages, the result is :

- the distortion of the humanistic and cultural approach, vocational, of learning a foreign language, which implies a knowledge of uses, customs, culture etc. of a people, in the name of the "necessity" of learning one and not other languages;

- Community guidelines on plurilingualism, which, evidently, as pursued so far have favored only monolingualism, and English monolingualism, are avoided and effectively negated. On the other hand, learning other foreign languages does not guarantee international communication among all people, as should instead be the guaranteed right of every European citizen at the end of mandatory education.

- a serious danger of extinction, thanks to the monolingualistic outcome, is posed to the native language itself. A language is practically placed in the condition of self-extinguishing since, in the nursery schools of the people who speak it, entrance is allowed a foreign language with the reasoning that it is truly worth it, and that what is truly worth teaching is the English language, not the others, nor the national language. In such conditions the English language can't but overcome the national language and reach the position of first

language. In fact, between a rising language as language of the present and future and a declining language of the past, the rising language cannot but prevail.

These are the fundamental reasons for which the introduction of a non-ethnic but authentically international foreign language in our schools is necessary today.

The International Languages

The idea that the problems of world linguistic communication posed by the thousands of languages spoken by people could be resolved at the base, constructing a universal language, appeared with force in 17th century Europe. The dominant characteristic of the languages concocted up to the 19th century was that of being reasoned essentially in terms of classification of ideas, the natural languages being considered by philosophers to be deceptive and imperfect.

Starting in the 19th century, however, the *logothètes*, to use a neologism by Roland Barthes, constructed concretely languages, and there was no shortage of projects, calculated at about 500 by Pierre Janton.² Without going so far, without having to conduct special research, one can draw up a list of a hundred languages. The following list is shorter because it runs up to 1914, but testifies to an intense logothetic activity between 1879, when Volapük was invented, and 1914. In particular, in the course of the first fourteen years of this century, more than two new languages every year can be counted on this doubtlessly quite incomplete list: 1858, Cosmoglossa; 1868, Universalglot; 1879, Volapük; 1883, Weltsprache; 1887, Balta; 1887, International (Esperanto), Spokil; 1888, Spelin; 1889, Anglo-Franca; 1890, Mundolingue; 1893, Dil; 1896, Veltparl; 1898, Dilpok; 1900, Lingua komun; 1902, Reformlatein, Universal Latein, Idiom neutral; 1903, Latino sine flexione, Interlingua; 1904, Perio; 1905, Lingua internacional; 1906, Mondlingvo, Ulla; 1907, Ido, Lingwo internaciona, Apolema, Lingus european; 1908, Mez-voio, Romanizat, Dutalingue; 1909, Romanal, Italico; 1910, Adjuvilo, Nuv-esperanto, Reform-esperanto, Semi-latin, Perfect; 1911, Latin-esperanto, Latin-ido, Lingw adelfenzal, Simplo, Novi Latine, Molog; 1912, Reform neutral; 1914, Europeo.

Since they too are social phenomena, wherever such a need made itself clear, other languages of ethnic origin took on a planned and in some way artificial formation: Indonesian, the official Norwegian language and Modern Hebrew, the Israeli language, but also such languages as literary German, Italian, Swahili, and even French and English were formed in artificial ways in certain moments of their history in the course of the centuries.

It is interesting to observe that the idea of *lingua universalis* appears at the historic juncture of the decline of Latin as the vehicular language of the European élite, and takes form in many projects at another historic moment when French, which had taken the place of Latin, began to decline in its fulfillment of that role. In the two cases, we find this temptation to resolve the problem of international communication at its roots, and in the second case we see a strong connection between the emergence of the "Esperanto phenomenon" and that of the Nation-State: the very idea of universal language appears to be a response to the national (and linguistic) division of Europe.

Another observation: the density of constructed languages seems to grow as the First World War approaches, as if the projects were attempting to stave off the catastrophe which loomed on the political horizon.

Volapük and Esperanto, then, the only languages which enjoyed a certain degree of success, appear as the bearers of a message of brotherhood, egalitarian, internationalist, and pacific.

It was probably exactly among these "values" that the motivations can be found for the many countries - in particular historical moments - which persecuted and attacked those who used Esperanto: in the former Soviet Union, in Germany, Spain, and Portugal, in all territory occupied by the German Army in the last World War, as well as in countries such as China, Iran, and Iraq.

Volapük was the first artificial language to come out of the project phase to reach the practical stage, and had a brief but shining life.

"Ten years after it appeared, there were 25 newspapers printed in that language, 283 societies had been founded, and there were manuals in 25 languages. An Academy was created, which did not hesitate to discuss reforms. The intransigence of the author caused everything to fail, and provoked schism followed by disbanding starting in 1889."³

Esperanto was able to take advantage from this situation to fulfill a function made indispensable by the circumstances and occupy an available niche.

1. The *International* Language

In 1887 L.L. Zamenhof, born in 1859, published his first pamphlet about that which he called *International* language, using the pseudonym Esperanto to sign the text. Two years later, the first magazine came out, the *Esperantisto*, in 1894, Zamenhof published a dictionary, then a collection of exercises, and finally in 1905, the *Fundamento de Esperanto*, the text which covers the language's grammar in 16 rules.

The international congresses began: 1905 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, 1906 in Geneva, 1907 in Cambridge, 1908 in Dresden, 1909 in Barcelona, 1910 in Washington, 1911 in Antwerp, etc. There were 668 people at the first congress, and 3739 signed up for the Paris conference in 1914 (which was not held because of the War); the number of Esperantists grew regularly, even if it is difficult to estimate today the extension of that diaspora. The Universal Esperanto Association counts 40,000 members today, but some place the number of speakers to be 15 million. However that may be, it is clear that Esperanto is the only living universal language.⁴

The *International* language is formed on the fundamental bases which can be found above all in Indo-European languages. Esperanto is easier to learn than the other languages, is pronounced as it is written, the pronunciation rules are fixed, the grammar is based on 16 rules, through which the addition of about forty prefixes and suffixes to the roots can create enough words to express everything. Such a system can also be found in non Indo-European languages. Structurally the Esperanto language is not a European language, even if the roots are in the Indo-European languages and, until now, it has evolved and continues to evolve in a similar way to the national languages.

Esperatophone associations and Esperantists exist and operate not only in all Community and European countries, but also in the other continents. There are also associations of Esperanto speakers in various disciplines, who meet regularly, especially during the congresses; courses of Esperanto managed at many organisational levels (by the same Esperantist associations, by schools and universities) take place every year in all European countries and usually at the international level; permanent Esperanto centers exist in various countries and, in Europe, in France, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Bulgaria, while in Vienna, in the ex-imperial palace, there is an Esperanto Museum. An interesting recipe for international socialisation is the *Pasporta Servo* (Passport Service), a booklet listing the names and addresses of Esperantist citizens in dozens of countries who are willing to offer hospitality to other Esperantists. Radio Austria, Radio Havana, Radio Bandeirantes (Brasile), Radio Lithuania, Radio Peking, Radio Poland, Italian Radio, Radio Talinn, and the Vatican Radio, also transmit in Esperanto (almost always by shortwave).

Thousands of poems written in Esperanto have been published. Some of the hundred magazines and newspapers published are literary, and regularly publish new literary and poetry texts. Over the years a good number of novels originally written in Esperanto have come to light and works on the most varying sciences have been published: politics, social problems, medicine, philosophy, etc.

For some years Esperantists have cooperated with the Poetry Festival in Rotterdam and in 1993, with the recognition of the Esperanto PEN Club by the International PEN Club, Esperanto entered official history as a literary language.

Experimentation has shown that one can more easily express oneself in an unambiguous manner in Esperanto than in other languages; translation tests have shown that Esperanto gives better results than national languages as a bridge language, so that it is understandable why the Systems Development Office (BSO) in Utrecht (Holland), in turn funded by the European Community and by the Dutch Economy Ministry, chose to use Esperanto as a bridge-language in an automatic translation project.

This language is revealed to be quite well adapted for introductory language instruction - in that role, the most in-depth research and experimentation has been that of the Institute of Pedagogic Cybernetics of the German University of Paderborn directed by Prof. H. Frank. The knowledge of Esperanto, especially in childhood, facilitates the learning of other languages. It further helps develop logical thinking. One year of Esperanto study provides a "passive knowledge" which makes all texts in the language, both literary and scientific, accessible.

1.1. Official recognition

The first official recognition of the *International Language* was by the League of Nations. The LN, which preceded the present United Nations Organisation after the First World War, was interested in Esperanto right from the start as a possible solution to the language problem, already extant even then.

During the first general assembly in 1920 a proposal for a resolution was presented which sounded like this:

The League of Nations, noting the linguistic difficulties which prevent direct relations between peoples, and the urgent need to eliminate such impediments to permit good reciprocal comprehension between nations,

follows with interest the experiments of official instruction of the International Language Esperanto in the public schools of some member states of the League of Nations; it is hoped that such teaching will be extended to the whole world, so that children of all countries will know from now on at least two languages, their own native language and an easy instrumental language for international communication; the Secretary General is invited to prepare, for the next session, a detailed report on the results achieved in this field.

For the strong opposition of the French representative, who sustained French as "already universal in the world of thought," the proposal for a resolution was sent back to a special commission for further examination.

During the second meeting of the General Assembly, September 1921, a second resolution was adopted without opposition, which contained the following recommendation:

...The commission retains that this problem, in which an ever greater number of states are interested, deserves a careful study before being treated by the Assembly. It was already sent last year to a commission, which presented a brief report, recommending that the Secretary General conduct an inquiry into the experiments already conducted and the factual results achieved. The commission proposes that the subject be written in the Order of the Day for the next meeting, and that the Secretary General prepare, in the meantime, a complete and documented report as stated in the proposed resolution...

In April 1922 in the Palace of Nations, the International Conference on Esperanto Instruction in the Schools, convoked by the J.J. Rousseau Institute (University School of Pedagogic Science in Geneva) and inaugurated with an opening speech by the Secretary General of the LN Mr. Eric Drummond, as a "valid help to the inquiry." Esperanto teachers from 28 countries and official representatives from 16 governments participated.

The conference published the following manifesto aimed as teachers all over the world:

Manifesto to teachers all over the world,

Geneva, April 20, 1922

We, educators from 28 countries and representatives of 16 governments, united at the Secretary of the League of Nations in Geneva, send a fraternal salute to those who work together with us in the task of enlightening men's minds.

We affirm with conviction that the basis of the present deplorable situation in which the civilised world finds itself is in that incomprehension and distrust which divide peoples.

We affirm our conviction that the only sure cure for this ailment is educating humanity and realisation of the principle of bringing nations together which is the reason for which the League of Nations was founded.

We consider the International auxiliary language Esperanto to be one of the most valid contributions to the solution of the problem of world reconstruction and affirm our conviction that this language, along with national cultural languages, should become part of the educational programme of every civilised country.

We would like to let you know the results of our experience teaching Esperanto in many schools.

We observed that Esperanto is completely sufficient for practical use as an international language, for all applications, both spoken and written, for which a language is used; further, it possesses noteworthy characteristics which prove its value as an educational instrument.

It is valuable as a aid for the correct use of the mother tongue. That is proven by the improved pronunciation and speech in the native maternal language, by better word choice, by the more precise knowledge of verbal signs and by the clearer comprehension of grammatic principles.

Esperanto facilitates acquisition of the modern and classical languages, making the task easier and saving time for the teacher, clarifying the grammatical forms, providing international word roots and accustoming the students' minds to expressing themselves in more than one language.

It seems to us that Esperanto should be taught to children as the first language after the mother tongue and introduced to the programme already at the primary school level. It would offer the student who is soon to leave school sufficient knowledge of a second language, practically utilisable. It would show, for those who continue on to secondary school, if they have an aptitude for further language study, and it would further them towards this study with a mind prepared for it. It would make it possible, consequently, to save time and obtain better results in language study. Students without predisposition for language study could devote themselves to other more appropriate studies.

We have observed that the knowledge of Esperanto has effectively awakened in our students a greater knowledge and a greater appreciation of geography, world history, and even moral education and also a greater interest and a greater sympathy for foreign peoples, for their customs, literature, and art. Esperanto prepares children for world peace and thus pursues the ideals of the League of Nations. This is realised especially through an exchange of letters, postcards, and drawings between children of different countries, through reading international newspapers in Esperanto, and the study of foreign literature. Students can correspond after only a few months of study. The moral advantage of this correspondence that ties together many countries is very great.

With two hour-long lessons a week, students can acquire in one year the practical knowledge that for any other idiom cannot even be achieved in three years.

We submit this manifesto for your most serious consideration and we strongly encourage you to promote the teaching of Esperanto in your country, not only for its usefulness in commerce, science, and other fields of international activity, but also for its moral value, as a stimulus towards that system of friendly relations between peoples of the world, which is the real goal of the League of Nations.⁵

For the third General Assembly of the League of Nations in September 1922, the report was ready on the inquiry, "Esperanto as international auxiliary language." The summary conclusions were the following:

From the inquiry undertaken by the Secretary General, according to the decision of the second Assembly of the League of Nations, it results that:

1. Aside from the question of a language for diplomatic use, the need for an auxiliary language for direct international relations seems to be strongly felt everywhere.

2. Most of the eminent scientific or commercial associations who have studied the problem have declared themselves to be favorable to a neutral and simplified language, which does not in any way put the historic prestige of the national literary languages in question, and generally recommend Esperanto.

3. Esperanto seems to effectively be one of the most perfect, apparently the simplest, and in any case the most diffuse of the conventional languages proposed.

4. Esperanto is adapted to play the role of international auxiliary language, and a vast written and spoken use has already given it the characteristics of a living and flexible language, already mature and capable of further enriching itself.

5. Esperanto is taught, both as an obligatory and optional subject, in state elementary and secondary schools, in 17 states based on articles of law, ministerial decrees, or decisions by the local administration.

6. Experiments have demonstrated that Esperanto can be easily learned, because European and American children learn it in a year with two hours a week, and children in the Far East in two years with the same number of lessons, while six years of study, four or five hours a week, are necessary to learn another European language. For adults, the time necessary is often shorter: from 25 to 40 lessons are generally enough.

7. Esperanto would not increase the load of scholastic programmes and would not come into competition with the national cultural languages, because experience shows that, on the contrary, it makes study easier and earns time, as a logical introduction, in the study of Latin, Greek, and the modern languages.

8. The institutions which handle scholastic teaching of Esperanto hope that the stability of the language will be guaranteed by an international recognition which allows the Esperantist Academy to control the normal growth of the language, protecting at the same time its unity.

9. The diffusion of Esperanto is considered by many governments as an important progress in civilisation, but its obligatory teaching in the schools depends above all on the existence of some kind of international agreement, which guarantees that a sufficiently large number of states are disposed to make decisions in that direction.

10. Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Cina, Denmark, Egypt, Japan, Norway, New Zealand, and Hungary have already communicated to the international office of the Universal Telegraphic Union that they are disposed to allow Esperanto, along with the national languages, to be used for international telegraphic communications.

11. The use of Esperanto seems to spread a spirit of international solidarity which is completely in line with League of Nations.

The report on "Esperanto as international auxiliary language" was distributed by the General Assembly and underwent examination by the Fifth Commission ("Society and Humanity"). Here a lively discussion took place. The French delegate, senator Reynald, personally sympathetic towards Esperanto, but the instructions of his government were completely contrary. The Minister of Public Instruction, Léon Bérard, had just prohibited the teaching and propagandising of Esperanto in all French schools, as a dangerous vehicle of internationalism and competitor of French in the world. The French delegate proposed sending the matter to the Commission for Intellectual Cooperation, to avoid an immediate decision. For fear of the great powers, 18 representatives

voted against 8 in favor of the French dilatory proposal to pass the point which referred to schools to the Commission for Intellectual Cooperation. In order not to offend the Asian and smaller European countries, visibly favorable to Esperanto, the recognition of the rest of the report, which concerned the existing facts, was unanimously voted.

Lord Cecil supported the official recognition of the report, which he considered "a great success for Esperanto" and advised Esperantists to continue their work courageously. "The Commission for Intellectual Cooperation will have to remember that not only intellectuals need a world language, but their very peoples."

"When the Fourth General Assembly of the League of Nations met in September, 1923, the French government gave specific instructions to its representative Jacques Bardoux to utilise the Commission for Intellectual Cooperation resolution to definitively eliminate Esperanto. He then presented that resolution in the Fifth Commission under the form of a LN resolution, recommending the study of foreign languages rather than artificial languages. Delegates of other nations protested. Many of them specified that they would not have insisted on the subject of Esperanto in order not to upset the French government, but they could not in any way accept a resolution that seemed in some way to go against Esperanto, because the movement had many supporters in their countries. Even the British delegates warned that they would have held the resolution up.

At that point Mr Bardoux withdrew the resolution and thus the opinion of the Commission for Intellectual Cooperation was neither confirmed nor accepted by the League of Nations, which remained blocked at the report adopted in 1922 that saw in the evidence the value of Esperanto and its role as a living language."⁶

This concise report on the "Esperanto File" of the LN shows how already 70 years ago, there was awareness of the language problem, how the pedagogic value of Esperanto was tested by experts back then, but, also, just being right was not enough to succeed: political, economic, nationalist, and hegemonic motives had a great weight in opposing even the conclusions of experts and specialists.

The hegemony of certain nations and their languages is not, however, eternal, since it is tied to their political and economic power. French has lost much of its prestige and influence in the international arena to English, which now defends its own hegemonic and political position at the expense of French and the "small" countries and their "losing" languages.

Some years later, a concrete official recognition of Esperanto came with its admission to telegram use.

Following, however, the story through the League of Nations and, particularly, UNESCO, in 1954 the Plenary Assembly of UNESCO in Montevideo approved a resolution which underlined the significance of Esperanto in bringing people together. According to that resolution, the results reached by means of Esperanto fully conform with the aims and ideals of UNESCO. In 1985, then, the UNESCO Plenary Assembly in Sofia newly confirmed the significance of Esperanto and underlined the important progress made in the field of reciprocal comprehension of peoples and cultures of different countries. In the resolution, there was an invitation to follow the development of Esperanto and member states were asked to promote the study of problems relative to languages and the introduction of Esperanto in schools and higher institutions.

1.2. The International Language as linguistic orientation

The language teaching quality of the international language turns out to be quite interesting - bearing in mind that the number of languages in Europe is increasing rather than decreasing, with Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian etc. now spoken: working as a "linguistic model," a "unit of measure" of languages - to be clear - learned prior to any other foreign language, it facilitates, saving time, the later study of other languages.

The idea of losing a little time to gain a lot more down the road has been exploited above all in teaching science: before the object itself is studied in all its complexity, a model of it is presented, pedagogically adequate.

In a biology course, for example, the complete, regular, model of a human skeleton built for the purpose is used, without the deformations and defects of real skeletons, disassemblable in order to separately observe the different elements, even if in reality these cannot be disconnected.

To more concretely understand the language teaching introductory effect of the International language the following example can be used:

- observe the figure shown here; it is made up of a series of signs;
- to memorise these signs and their respective order in the whole, a child needs at least two minutes, but a particular preparatory instruction lasting not more than 5 or 6 seconds can facilitate learning to such a degree that anyone can learn this series of signs, in the correct order, in about 10 seconds;
- the particular preparatory instruction consists in the following information: all signs are symmetrical, it is only necessary to look at the right half, thus you should cover the left half of the column using a piece of paper.
- thanks to this brief lesson, one sees immediately that the eight figures uncovered are not but the first eight cardinal numbers.

In about 10 seconds, almost 100 seconds of learning time have been gained.

At the Institute of Pedagogic Cybernetics at the University of Paderborn in Germany, a similar method was also studied and confirmed for learning foreign languages.

The preparatory teaching conducted by this Institute prepares students to become aware of the essential characteristics of languages, using the international language Esperanto as a model, a language with a clear and simple structure, absolutely regular and, thanks to its agglutinative character, detachable into combinable morphological elements. A model which is easy to assimilate and develops aptitude for the study of other languages.

Even before the experiments conducted by Prof. Helmar Frank in Germany, similar research was conducted in Hungary by I. Szerdahelyi of the University of Science in Budapest. A group of native Hungarian speakers, after having studied Esperanto for two years in the third and fourth grade of elementary school, were divided to study their learning of Russian, German, English, and French.

According to the results, preliminary Esperanto study led to a 25% improvement in acquiring Russian, 30% for German, 40% for English, and even 50% for French. In other terms, children who had received preparatory teaching obtained notably better results than their peers who had not had an analogous introduction to the study of foreign languages.

This system of preparatory instruction was put into practice in Germany, with a greater number of students, but with the sole aim of finding a way of facilitating the learning of English. The results showed that after two years of linguistic orientation using the *International* language, the advantage was about 30%.

The experiments conducted and repeated many times at Paderborn went much further:

Students were divided into two competing groups. One started English instruction in third grade (A), the other, instead, followed preparatory teaching through Esperanto and started English only at the fifth grade (B). The Esperanto programme required 160 hours in all, which can seem like a great loss of time, but, according to the final results, in seventh grade group B reached group A's level of English learning and in eighth grade they exceeded it. In other words, those who benefitted from the preparatory teaching gained more time than they had lost in preparation.

The advice of those who study cybernetics applied to pedagogy and foreign language instruction is the following:

1. That language study begin with elementary school, starting at 8 years of age and with two years of Esperanto.

2. After the introduction of the foreign language, Esperanto is used in teaching a determined subject, such as geography, as an interscholastic means of communication (correspondence).

3. There are efforts to coordinate the steps necessary in all European Community countries to ensure a simpler linguistic communication between citizens.

1.2.1. Some pedagogic experiments

It is interesting to note how many teaching experiments have been conducted over the years and in how many places. The ones which follow are the most significant.

Girls' Middle School in Bishop Auckland (GB)

Years: 1918-1921

Aims: Research on the question if prior study of Esperanto facilitates later study of French and German.

Conclusions:

- the simple and rational grammar of Esperanto constitutes, especially for less gifted children, a bridge which makes a more manageable passage to the complicated French or German grammars possible; it makes the meaning of the grammatical terms visible;

- it clearly indicates the meaning of the grammatical prefixes and suffixes;

- accustoms children to the idea of relationship between words, the construction of words, and derivations;

Esperanto introduces students to the international lexico.

Reports:

- Dr. Alexandra FISCHER, *Languages by way of Esperanto*.

- *Eksperimento farita en Bishop Auckland (GB) en la jaroj 1918-1921* in "Internacia Pedagogia Revuo", 1931.

Bishop's Elementary School, Auckland (New Zealand)

Years: 1922-1924

Aims: Compare the ease of acquisition of Esperanto with that of French.

Reports:

- article in *Enciklopedio de Esperanto*, volume I, p.436, on the pedagogic value of Esperanto.

Wellesley College, Department of Psychology (Ohio, USA)

Year: 1924

Aims: research on the question if the "synthetic" languages can be learned more easily and quickly than the ethnic languages. Comparison between Esperanto and Danish.

Conclusions: Esperanto students achieved better results compared to those studying Danish, in part because of Esperanto's internal structure, as well as the interest and enthusiasm aroused by Esperanto in the student's minds.

Report: Christian RUCKMICK, *The Wellesley College Danish-Esperanto experiment*.

Columbia University, New York (USA)

Years: 1925-1931

Aims: research on the question, if and to what degree a planned language can be more easily learned than an ethnic language.

Note: the experiment was organised on order by the IALA (International Auxiliary Language Association) by Dr. Edward Thorndike, director of the psychology section of the institute for pedagogic research at Columbia University.

Conclusions:

- it is possible for the average student to understand written and spoken Esperanto in 20 hours better than he can understand French, German, Italian, or Spanish after 100 hours

- 5 hours of study to learn German give practically no results; 5 hours of Esperanto study are enough to give a general idea of the grammar of the entire language;

- in general, in a time limit from 10 to 100 hours of study, the results acquired in the study of a synthetic language are practically from 5 to 15 times better than those obtain after the study of an ethnic language, according to the difficulty of the latter (Eaton, p. 6-7);

- for native English speaking students, the results of studying Latin, German, or French are better if such study is preceded by that of a planned language, as preparatory introduction (Eaton, p. 27-30).

Report: Helen S. EATON, *The Language Learning. Summary*.

Public High School in New York

Years: 1934-35

Aims: research the influence of the study of Esperanto for a semester on later study of French and, in parallel, the native language, English.

Report: Helen S. EATON, *An Experiment in Language Learning*

Provincial Grammar School in Sheffield (GB)

Years: 1947-51

Aims: See if Esperanto is truly a useful introduction to the study of French. Conclusions: In summary, it was concluded that, among the less intelligent students, those who devoted a year to Esperanto succeeded better in French after four years, without additional study time for that language in the three years spent studying it. In any case, among the more intelligent students, the best success in French was among those who began it immediately.

Those who began with Esperanto achieved a better "passive knowledge" and those who began with French acquired better "active use."

Reports:

J. H. HALLORAN (lecturer in Pedagogy at the University of Sheffield), *A four year experiment in Esperanto as an introduction to French.*

V. C. NIXON, *Lastatempaj eksperimentoj pri Esperanto en lernejoj.*

Egerton Park School, Denton (Manchester, GB).

Years: 1948 and following

Aims: study of less intellectually gifted students to ascertain if prior Esperanto study facilitates French study.

Conclusions: "A child can learn as much Esperanto in about 6 months as he would French in 3-4 years... if all children studied Esperanto during the first 6-12 months of a 4-5 year French course, they would gain much and lose nothing."

Report: Norman UILLIAMS (scholastic director) *Report on the teaching of Esperanto from 1948 to 1965.*

Middle School in Somero (Finland)

Years: 1958-63

Aims: research the study of Esperanto and the question of whether such study is advantageous or disadvantageous for the study of German.

Note: the experiment took place under the direction of the Minister of Public Instruction.

Conclusions:

- the language knowledge acquired with Esperanto was evidently such as could not be reached (under similar conditions) with any other foreign language;

- the unchallenged superiority in the ability to use German achieved by the students who had studied Esperanto was observed;

- the rapid results achieved in Esperanto instruction raised the students' courage and their faith in themselves;

the capacity to accept new ways in which to express themselves already constitutes a help, at the subconscious level, in assimilating a new foreign language.

Reports:

J. VILKKI, V. SETÄLÄ, *La eksperimenta instruado de Esperanto en la geknaba mezgrada lernejo de Somero (Suomio)*; V. SETÄLÄ, *Vizito al la eksperimenta lernejo en Somero, Finnlando.*

Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest (H).

Years: 1962-63

Aims: Compare, in three middle school classes, the results obtained studying Esperanto with those obtained by studying Russian, English, and German.

Conclusions:

For the Hungarian children, the coefficients of the result, in terms of preset educational goals, turn out to be the following: 30% for Russian, 40% for German, 60% for English, and 130% for Esperanto. "Such indications perfectly confirm the initial observations made by Prof. Barczy: in scholastic language instruction circumstances, Esperanto is the only foreign language for which educational goals can be met." (Szerdahelyi, 1970, quoted in Lobin, p. 39).

Reports:

István SZERDAHELYI (University lecturer), *La didaktika loko de la internacia lingvo en la sistemo de lernejoj studobjektoj*; Günter LOBIN, *Die Internacia Lingvo als Bildungskybernetisches Sprachmodell*, p. 59.

International Pedagogic Experiment

Years 1971-74

Organiser: International Society of Esperanto Teachers (ILEI)

Aims:

- show that, under normal scholastic instruction conditions, Esperanto can be more easily learned than any other language;

- examine if the study of Esperanto constitutes an enrichment of general linguistic knowledge, useful for a better knowledge of one's own native language;

- examine if Esperanto, as a neutral and international language, has easily utilisable pedagogic qualities and consequently facilitates the study of other languages;

- demonstrate that, even during instruction, Esperanto is already applicable in various way to a greater extent than other foreign languages.

Reports:

Marta KOVÁCS, *Internacia Didaktika Eksperimento Kvinlanda*; Johano INGUSZ, *Instruspertoj en esperantfakaj klasoj (en Hungario)*.

Internacia Lingvo als Bildungskybernetisches Sprachmodell, p. 59.

International Pedagogic Experiment

Years 1975-77

Organiser: International Society of Esperanto Teachers (ILEI)

Participating: 16 students of both sexes in Belgium, 45 in France, 90 in Greece, 77 in West Germany, and 74 in Holland. A final week united in St. Gérard (Belgium) in 1977: mathematics, geography ("Europe and Us"), drawing, sport, and music instruction in Esperanto, as well as Esperanto itself.

Aims:

- demonstrate the greater teaching effectiveness and economy of Esperanto instruction when compared to other foreign languages;
- study the influence of Esperanto on the improved study of the native language;
- conduct research on the possibility of improving reading and spelling capabilities in children, especially those who present problems in this field;
- form a capacity for language comprehension of such a degree that the children are capable of more easily learning other foreign languages;
- contribute to a European childhood education and a humanistic internationalism.

Conclusions:

- In the opinion of the non-Esperantist Belgian Inspector General: "Esperanto is the right language as a basis for those who plan on studying other foreign languages."
- positive progress was made in the evolution towards a complete internationalisation. Further, Esperanto revealed itself to be an appropriate instrument for common reciprocal comprehension and an excellent vehicle for other teaching subjects.

Report: Helmut SONNABEND, *Esperanto, lerneja eksperimento*.

Instruction of Linguistic Orientation, Paderborn (D)

Years: late '70s - early '80s

Description: This kind of instruction was the object of in-depth study by a group from the Institute of Pedagogic Cybernetics in Paderborn, under the direction of Dr H. Frank, well known in cybernetic circles.

It is characterised by the introduction to the study of foreign languages, uses children from 8-10 years old and is based on comparison between languages, using Esperanto as a reference. Since it is perfectly adapted to children, it turns out to be extremely effective from the pedagogic point of view.

Scientifically measured, the results confirm that such instruction of linguistic orientation:

- considerably increases children's interest in the diversity of European cultures and languages;
- require a small time investment which can be saved during later study of other foreign languages;
- is of help in teaching the native language, geography, and mathematics;
- very quickly creates the possibility of interethnic communication perfect for children, without limiting it to the territory of a specific privileged language. In such a way it opens the way to better comprehension between people, without language discrimination.

Source:

Protocols of the annual November meetings in Paderborn "Laborkonferencoj: Interlingvistiko en Scienco kaj Klerigo" (Working conference: Interlinguistics in Science and Education), which can be obtained from the Institute of Pedagogic Cybernetics in Paderborn. Also in the works by Frank, Lobin, Geisler, and Meder. (see bibliography)

An Experiment in an Italian Elementary School

In Italy, where Esperanto receives positive treatment in a 1952 memo from the Minister of Public Instruction, Segni, there have been various experiments in the use of the *International Language*, above all in the cities of Cesena (Gianfranca Braschi Taddei), Cagliari (Nino Pala) e Genoa. The experiment cited here took place at the "Rocca" Elementary School in San Salvatore di Cogorno (province of Genoa).

Years: 1983-88

Classes: 9-11 years (study Esperanto)

11-14 years (study French)

Aims:

- rapidly start providing a useful instrument of linguistic communication for immediate use in transnational reports (correspondence, possible encounters);
- dispose of a simple and regular comparative model for more effective instruction of the native language;
- prepare a practical basis for later study of foreign languages;
- serve to enrich the scholastic programme through a wider use of other subjects.

Conclusions:

- According to the final analysis, the word capacity achieved by the children was remarkably good: they spontaneously conversed about various topics, their pronunciation was correct, they occasionally ran into grammatical and lexical errors, but without affecting reciprocal comprehension;

- comparing the results of the same students in Esperanto and French gave indications of the learning rates for the two languages;

- after having compared the French exercises of those children who had previously studied Esperanto with those who had not received such preliminary preparation, indications as to the introductory value of the *International Language* were reached.

Report: Elisabetta FORMAGGIO (Chiavari, Italy), *Lerneja eksperimento pri lernfacileco kaj transfero en la fremdlingvoinstruado*.

1.3. Conclusions

There are, then, good reasons to call attention to the international language: good reasons ignored up until now, or even hidden by deliberate misinformation.

This state of things has provoked the great, and probably serious, delay in understanding the cultural, social, and political opportunity of putting "into play" a non-ethnic and authentically international language alongside the others in our schools.

The international language is at the base of a more appropriate conception of plurilingualism in the European Union and allows the elaboration of a new, more realistic language policy. It in fact:

a) educates to the construction of peace, making concrete the conception of belonging to a single human family and a "world environment," rather than one geo-nationally determined and circumscribed. In a moment of resurgent nationalism, sometimes in aggravated forms, spreading a means of international comprehension which finds in the equal dignity of peoples and their linguistic expression one of its strong points, aims at overcoming narrow national viewpoints which remain tied to the concept of nation even when there is aperture to other countries' languages;

b) contributes, in fact, to safeguard European and global linguistic and cultural diversity;

c) allows transnational cultural and commercial relations in a common language, without discrimination, which can be fully acquired within the time spent in mandatory education;

d) facilitates, taught as Linguistic Orientation, the study and learning of national foreign languages;

e) avoids the predominance of one or two "major" languages in the teaching of possible foreign languages;

f) enriches metalinguistic reflection even in the native language;

g) allows notable savings of time and money, both in teacher training and in student work, with additional advantages for other subjects such as learning ethnic foreign languages (A useful study would be one which examined the necessary cost, in time and money, for teaching and learning an ethnic foreign language compared to the international language).

2. Proposals

There are, then, two goals which the introduction of the *International Language* in Italian schools aims to satisfy: Esperanto as an "end," that is, as an authentically international language of communication, and the *International Language* as a "means," that is, as a language-teaching instrument.

Beyond making such themes immediately known in the schools through a ministerial memo (with this document enclosed), sent to the General Direction, Inspectors, Superintendents, Directors, Heads of Institutes, to the IRRSAE, the CEDE, and the Library of Educational Documentation, that which seems appropriate in light of the conclusions cited above is to add the *International Language* to the four languages presently taught in the elementary schools.

2.1

Without legislative modifications or further expense, based on the law reforming the elementary school it is possibly, immediately, to add, by ministerial decree, the *International Language* (Esperanto) to the foreign languages currently taught at elementary schools, establishing appropriate forms of promotion and realisation such as, for example:

- the realisation of an informational pamphlet and training material on the *International Language*, with the collaboration of the associations and organisations listed above, directed at the components of Public Instruction mentioned above;

- the creation of training courses in Esperanto for elementary school teachers, on the model of those already created for foreign language teachers, with the assistance of the responsible associations and organisations.

2.2

It is more than obvious that in the context of the multiplicity of scholastic levels and grades, innumerable further information, study, experimentation, promotion, training, etc., initiatives are possible. For example, the Ministry could:

A) launch linguistic experimentation and promote it in the context of the European Union during the next semester of Italian Presidency of the Union:

- the Ministry of Public Instruction could distribute this report at the European level, starting with parallel ministries.

- initiatives of parallel experimentation could be proposed, in Union countries, keeping the varying scholastic structure in mind;

B) sponsor study and retraining seminars relative to 1st and 2nd level secondary schools

C) conduct, through the General Direction for Cultural Exchanges, and with the help of the responsible Esperantist associations and organisations, liaison work for international exchanges;

D) acquire, through the General Direction for Elementary Instruction, information on the Paderborn Method, and then organise two retraining and study seminars for, respectively, Inspectors and L2 teachers in elementary schools, possibly organised in collaboration with the Institute of Pedagogic Cybernetics of the University of Paderborn and the presence of Prof. H. Frank.

E) launch monitoring aimed at ascertaining how quickly and with what results elementary school teachers can be provided with knowledge of the *International Language* and the capacity to teach it as a propedeutic subject;

F) in light of the noteworthy intercultural value of the *International Language*, promote its use within certain ministerial projects such as, for example, the *Youth Project* and the *Child Project 2000*, or involve Esperantist representatives in these projects.

It seems opportune, in closing, that the Ministry send its observers to the most important places and occasions where the *International Language* is used or is object of discussion: Esperantist centers, congresses, conferences and various presentations, national and international.

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¹ Published in the Official Bulletin of the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction, no. 21-22, May 25-June 1, 1995: p. 7-43

²P. Janton, *L'espéranto*, Paris 1973, p. 13

³ P. Janton, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁴ See P. Janton, *L'espéranto*, Paris, 1973

⁵ István Szerdahelyi, *Metodologio de Esperanto*, p. 313

⁶ See Edmond PRIVAT, *Historio de la lingvo Esperanto*, 1982, p. 136-151; István SHERDAHELYI, *Metodologio de Esperanto*, 1975, p. 310; I. NITOBÉ', *La question des langues et la Société des Nations*.