



## Time to Implement a Neglected Revolutionary Idea

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### Abstract

One of the first measures to be introduced into the Assembly of the League of Nations in December 1920 was the proposal of Lord Robert Cecil, delegate of South Africa, that in order to deal with “the language difficulties which prevent direct relations between the peoples” it is to be hoped that “the instruction of the international language Esperanto” “will become general in the whole world, in order that children of all nations from now on would know at least two languages, their mother tongue and an easy means of international communication.” [Peter G. Forster, *The Esperanto Movement*, The Hague: Mouton, 1982, page 172]

The world now is greatly different from what it was in 1920. One of the major changes has been from an internationalism whose image of the world was a globe with many nations of different colors to a globalism inspired by the well-known photos of Earth from space as well as much faster means of transportation and communication. We humans have transitioned from an inter-national world to a planetary community.

An important and too much neglected issue is what we should do in the way of language education for our children. Should each of them learn not only two languages but many languages? Should there be a plan for all of them to learn at least one common language; and if so, which language should it be? Should it be some widely used national language such as English, or should it be a nationality-neutral, designed, easier-to-learn language such as Esperanto?

I maintain that it is desirable for our children to learn several languages but that nevertheless there should be a plan for all of them to learn one common language so that every Earthling will be to communicate directly with every other Earthling. As a native speaker of English, I believe that English is not a good or just choice for the common language of planet Earth. To adopt any national language is unfair to all those children who have a different native language, and in the case of English that is 95% of them.

Despite my own wonderful experiences as an Esperantist, I am conscious that Esperanto is basically a European language and thus not a perfect candidate to be the common world language. Esperanto has many features worth imitation, however, such as being completely phonetic and totally rule-guided with an ingenious system of affixes which greatly facilitates the quick acquisition of a large vocabulary. It has also been inspired by the ideal of the single human family.

I propose that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appoint a commission to develop a nationality-neutral, easily learnable common world language so that we can begin to implement the wonderful ideal considered by the League of Nations almost a hundred years ago. Can anything be more important for the future of education?

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