



The Big Ben in London – ENGLAND.

*What is interlingua ?
How did it appear ?
What is it good for ?*

During the 1930s and 1940s, linguists from several European and North American universities analysed together some projects of international auxiliary languages, in order to assess which among them could be viable in case the world decided to adopt a common language for interchange that was planned rather than ethnic. The most celebrated projects by then were Esperanto (1887), Latino sine Flexione (1903), Ido (1907) and Occidental (1922). Besides these, there were hundreds of others, generally never used by anyone but their own inventors.

The entity that sponsored these linguists was called *International Auxiliary Language Association* and had its headquarters in the United States. After some years, it got to the conclusion that none of such language projects was suitable enough for the aim they proposed. Ido was a revised and improved version of Esperanto, and Occidental mixed the regular grammar of Ido to the vocabulary of Latino sine Flexione, which on its turn employed only elements of Greco-Latin origin and words of international course. André Martinet, a director of IALA, believed that the solution could involve a reformation of Occidental, the constructed language closest to the criteria sharpened up by the linguists of the association itself. At that point, IALA was already working with some alternatives of grammar and vocabulary and had already defined that the best way to build an international language included taking advantage of the Greco-Latin cultural heritage common to the languages of the West and also present, even if in a lower proportion, in the languages all over the world.

After he became director of IALA, Alexander Gode gave Interlingua the aspect with which it was published for the first time, in 1951. Five "control languages" were established: English, Spanish, French, Italian and Portuguese. To belong to the international language, a word has to be present in the majority of these languages. If this is not possible, the existence of the word must then be looked up in German or Russian, which serve as consultation languages. If no suitable word is found all the same, a word is chosen from Latin or one of the control languages – this last resource revealed itself necessary for certain grammatical words such as pronouns, prepositions and conjunctions, as they are very different from one natural language to other, even if these languages belong to a same family. The procedure is not limited to words of Greco-Latin origin; words as *vodka* or *sushi*, for example, are part of Interlingua because they were adopted by most control languages. Once these languages are widely studied in diverse parts of the world, they attest the internationality of any certain word.

As Interlingua gains adherents and is practised, it evolves just like any language. New words are incorporated – more or less recent examples are *virtual*, *global*, *e-posta*, *genoma*, *cybercafé*, *tsunami* –, whereas others fall into disuse. Many Latinisms that were commonplace formerly, when Latin was still widely taught at schools, ended up being replaced naturally with words borrowed from the control languages. Whenever the grammar does not lay down clear rules about a doubtful subject, the control languages will be there to be researched. If these rules are complicated or archaic, the own users end up simplifying and modernising them, often without even noticing, exactly as it happens with any natural living language. In Interlingua, the most important is intercommunication, the interchange between people who speak different languages, regardless of linguistic purism or grammatical correctness. Its function is the same one Latin had once and English has today, with the advantage that Interlingua demands less time to study and sounds familiar to all those who know one of its control languages, even if superficially. Moreover, Interlingua is not the mother tongue of anyone, but rather the cultural heritage common to the whole Western civilisation.

Information:

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