

Basic Questions (see also section on debate as to what form it would take)

What is the Situation?

Ever since a language barrier has been present, individuals have been dismayed, saddened, or frustrated to be unable to discover the mysteries held within their fellow global citizens' minds or to reveal their own. This mutual unintelligibility, however disturbing, has perhaps contributed to enabling the evolution of a rich diversity of thought upon which we are now increasingly in the position—and need—of being able to readily draw for our collective advantage. Communication and transportation technologies; military and environmental threats; social, health, and economic crises; and many other developments, have pulled us together, ready or not, willing or unwilling, in our business, government, science, artistic, and religious worlds, and penetrating into our local neighborhoods and families. However, we remain unable to adequately deal with the challenges and possibilities before us due to our lack of a common language.

What is the Solution?

It is now evident that humankind as a whole is in dire need of a common world auxiliary language and script—a language which, whether to be invented or chosen from among the existing languages of the world, would be selected through a globally representative and democratic process, engaging experts in various disciplines (e.g., politics, media, education, linguistics, economics, social sciences, etc.) and leading to a decision binding on all countries. Such a language, once chosen, will be universally required and taught, alongside the country's native language, beginning in primary school, in all the countries of the world and be promoted as a universal medium for communication.

The world is becoming “smaller” and we are clearly interdependent just as a family. Just as a family could not function well without a common language shared by its members, so too is it with our world as a whole.

(Note: the proposed solution calls for both the choice of and instruction in a spoken language as well as in a written script. If only one of these were chosen, the many benefits which could be reaped would be too severely limited. Clearly, both a spoken and written language must be chosen.)

Benefits and Costs

Benefits of an International Language (and Benefits of this Method of Spreading the Idea)

Summary of Benefits

(see also Emotional Appeal below)

The advantages would be vast, ranging from:

- easing social integration (see also section on children)
- eliminating costs, delays, and misunderstandings associated with translation and language learning/teaching for individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments (see below for more on this)
- bringing convenience to travellers and emigrants
- facilitating scientific development and access for poorer peoples to education
- allowing the sharing of cultural, spiritual, and artistic heritages of various peoples to a world audience
- promoting peace and understanding through the elimination of suspicions and intermediaries' intervention brought about by our current lack of a common language.

The question we might instead ask is, whether there is any field of human endeavor which would NOT be benefited by a universal auxiliary language (and is not currently impeded by its absence).

(Some might argue--particularly in the case of an invented language--that the choice of such a language could also eliminate gender bias encoded in a language, that a language could be learned and expressed more efficiently, and there are even claims that such a language could help people think better/faster (though language is generally proven to be much more controlled by thought than the other way around, if the latter is true at all).

Elaboration on Benefits of Avoiding Translation and Language Learning/Teaching

To expand on the second point above as to costs of translation and language learning/teaching, we can see that they are great in the absence of a universal auxiliary language--for translating services, translation machines or software, extra printing costs, hiring of specialized teachers and consultants, etc. The costs are enormous to society and the absence is an impediment to free trade--the free trade of both commerce as well as ideas.

Moreover, translation involves inconvenient time delays and inaccuracies (which take time to resolve--and which can also cause emotional damage and can even be life-threatening).

Elaboration on Benefits to Peace and Democratic Ideals by Avoiding Intermediaries

A universal language could help build the sought after facilitated communication and world unity (through circumventing the intermediaries which deliberately or unconsciously breed distrust among nations or language groups and eliminating natural barriers which conduce to suspiciousness and misunderstandings).

A frequent tool of totalitarian regimes is censoring the ideas of others (and even fabricating their words). This would become much more difficult as access to a common language with the outside world emerges for all their people (and any nations not signing on to such a universal language agreement would nevertheless increasingly be internally pressured to educate their citizens in such a language as they would increasingly feel the need of giving their citizens access to this language for economic development reasons).

However, it would not be confined to such totalitarian regimes, as all peoples, in the absence of a common language, inevitably develop prejudices about those they do not understand (and cannot understand in the absence of a common language).

Just think of nationalistic identity. Language generally even trumps nationality (and even at times race) in terms of identity. How much can or do speakers identify with their ancestry's native or national culture, for example if they don't speak their language (and how much do those native speakers identify with those not speaking their language)? This is not to say it is good not to identify with the people of one's national origin if they have another language (rather, the contrary), but the idea is used here as an example to show that if we had a world language where we could all communicate, how much less would be the excessive attachments to national identity versus a world-embracing one?

Although there are certainly plenty of conflicts between nations and peoples who share the same language (i.e., brothers fighting brothers), it should also be apparent that many of the world's alliances occur most readily between those sharing a common language. Consider, for example, how more easily it is to identify with the people of another country if one share a language with them. It is most likely that one's culture already has been influenced and intertwined with such cultures.

Who would Benefit from this Decision?

Everyone

A world auxiliary language would offer benefits (as described above) to all of the inhabitants of the earth. The ability to freely read from, write to, speak to, and listen to any other person we may come across, without requiring any translating intermediary would, in time, be given to all on earth.

This is one very momentous opportunity--one which never existed on such a scale in all of human history.

Access to feelings, ideas, opinions, and information--scientific, historical, artistic, etc. are currently locked away on websites, in books, magazines, television and radio programs (news, entertainment, cultural, educational, etc.), in conference calls, etc. throughout the world. Now that technology makes it possible for large numbers of people to have ready technical access to these sources of information, how can we delay in effecting the political solution which will allow future generations to all have the linguistic access required to make use of such technological breakthroughs?

The Poor

As to the benefits for the poorer members of our global community, economic inequities which continue to exist due to a lack of equal access for all to an economically advantageous language (and those in such a position are also more likely to be living with less access to other resources and opportunities) would be more leveled by the choice of a universal auxiliary language (particularly since such linguistic access would enhance their ability to take advantage of the technological resources now available for distance education, etc.).

All would have the opportunity from the time of childhood (when it is much easier to learn) of learning a more global language and could benefit from such direct access to the economic, scientific, and other resources which would already be (or would become) encoded within such a language.

It may be argued that an invented language may create a more level playing field (since all nations would not have the advantage of already knowing it), and if it were easy to learn, the poor could particularly gain ready access. However, it might also be argued that the choice of an existing language would at least allow those poor speaking the language to get a head start (and that others could catch up eventually)--particularly if one was chosen which included large masses of people (including the world's poor) such as Chinese or Hindi.

Even non-natives may prefer an existing language other than their own, given that their country may already have in place the mechanisms for educating in that language.

In any case, these factors are all considerations which the representative global body will certainly need to take into consideration. But whatever language or kind of language is finally chosen, the choice would lead to the leveling of the playing field for the poor by giving greater access to all to an economically advantageous language.

Those Perceiving a lack of Integration on the Part of Immigrants

Many peoples--particularly in economically "developed" countries--grumble about the perceived failures of immigrants to learn the language of the country to which they emigrate. Although this perception is often ill-founded, yet there is indeed a grain of truth in the importance of all citizens learning to speak a common language for social cohesion.

However, since the choice would be a global democratic decision (and not merely one on a limited national scale), the language chosen would "belong" to all the world's people. Natives would be challenged to make their own accommodations by learning the global language (particularly if the language were invented)--thus showing good will to the immigrants also faced with learning such a language.

But the result would be, whatever the choice for the language, a common language for society's members.

Those Concerned for immigrants (See also Children and Parents section)

Immigrants often face the stressful experience of not only having to adapt to a vastly different culture, but also to struggle to learn a new language--either past their prime age of language learning, or when they are children faced with the demands of acquiring large amounts of knowledge. Moreover, in addition to the struggle of continuing to learn the language (most likely along with carrying on a job whose difficulty may be compounded by the fact that they don't have proficiency in the language needed for the job), they must also face the difficulties in day to day living such as in seeing a doctor, going shopping, meeting neighbors, etc.

Post-Adolescent Language Learners

College students and older adults must both currently strain themselves to learn the market language(s) of the day (including especially those in poorer countries without ready access to the market languages who must spend valuable time, money, and effort in gaining such access).

A universal auxiliary language to be taught in all the schools of the world would ensure that future generations of students will not be unnecessarily forced to inherit the awkward necessity of learning a new language once they have passed the prime age at which language acquisition is fully automatic--sometime in adolescence or pre-adolescence.

Children and Parents

The problem of not having such a universal language is already acutely felt in schools throughout the world as immigrant students and parents are left in the dust, not able to learn the native language (such as English) quickly enough, especially at the pace required in modern society where the necessity for literacy in work is much greater than it used to be.

A universal auxiliary language would ensure that future generations of students will not be unnecessarily forced to adapt to an unduly challenging social setting in which they are unable to understand or communicate even basic needs for a time, and in which their parents are likely to be hampered in their ability to fully assist their children academically or socially.

Also, there are burdens placed on mainstream students by immigration in the absence of such a universal language--however necessary accommodating immigrants is. Resources are diverted from their education, not only financial resources, but also the human resources of the mainstream teachers who must seek to accommodate the immigrant students. This is not like Special Education students (though they should also be accommodated) in that there is less of an opportunity to prevent Special Education needs from existing, whereas were a universal language chosen, the whole need for immigrants to take separate second language instruction classes or separate bilingual instruction (at least in all subjects) would eventually fade away.

Schools (See also the Children and Parents section)

The school system as a whole is increasingly faced with expending its resources of time, money, and attention to accommodate an ever-growing linguistic diversity. The contributions that immigrants (and native language minority students) make (and receive) often greatly outweigh the sacrifices, but it would hardly be a sacrifice in the future, if the nations of the world agreed upon a universal auxiliary language so that future generations of emigrants would not face the same degree of challenge in moving to a different setting (nor would those institutions admirably receiving them).

It would also become easier for schools to find teachers, since they would not need to find qualified bilingual teachers knowing different languages--as the only bilingual teacher they would eventually need would be one proficient in the universal language who could teach immigrants the country's native language--and since all would be learning the universal language, such qualified teachers should not be hard to find.

Institutions

A large number of diplomatic, business, cultural, scientific, and other institutions must focus enormous resources of time, money, and effort to render, often imperfectly with negative repercussions, translations for their benefactors. A universal auxiliary language would render this unnecessary.

International, Regional, and National Institutions

Our national, regional, and international institutions are also engaged in a great deal of translation--whether the institutions are responsible for policing, diplomacy, trade, etc.. Such translation would eventually be rendered unnecessary as people come to accept and use the instituted universal auxiliary language.

A lingua franca for various regional and international fora is strongly needed. The United Nations, for example is significantly burdened by costs of translating text and dialogue as well as by the prospect of having to translate into even more than its current six official languages (as other countries also press for this privilege). Their choosing an official language--through representative means--would render this unnecessary.

Such an international forum could even set a great precedent toward the eventual adoption of such a universal auxiliary language by the nations of the world by doing research for establishing a tentative universal language for its own fora.

These costs faced by international, regional, and national institutions ultimately come at a cost to taxpayers, as these translation resources could instead be used for other more productive purposes were such an official language chosen.

Scientists

Scientists, whether in the technical or social science fields, would greatly benefit by having immediate access to the knowledge and wisdom of all the world's inhabitants. They would also benefit by being able to share their own insights to a wider audience.

Artists

Although artists would continue to be able to express their arts in their native language, they would also have access to a wider audience by using the international language (an audience much larger than could be gained by learning one or even several other non-official foreign languages).

Of course, artists would also be able to derive inspiration for their arts by having greater access to the thoughts and culture of their fellow world citizens.

Supporters of Creeds/Philosophies/Movements/Religions/Inventions/etc. who Wish to be Able to Explain, Justify, or Share their Ideas/Beliefs/Feelings/Writings

If you really have a good idea, it would sure be easier to diffuse, if your words could be understood by the widest possible audience. Otherwise your words may not be understood in the absence of translators (who may come at a cost), and even then, you wouldn't be sure the full idea was being properly translated.

Emotional/Artistic Appeal (see also section on Those Objecting to Whole Idea of a Common Language)

Although virtually all of the arguments could be considered supportable by emotion, there are certain arguments which in particular may touch an affective chord.

How I wish I could speak to your heart!

If we believe that the world is a family and should become a more united family, how could we bear not being able to understand our own dear family members and benefit from their insights and not being able to share insights which could benefit them? Just as racial equality, the equality of women with men, elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty, and universal education will ensure the greater availability of vast creative and productive resources to the world, so too will such a vast opportunity for the free trade of ideas, information, feelings, artistic expression, and beliefs such as a universal language would bring.

Innumerable songs and poems express (deliberately or coincidentally) the need for a common language. Just to take a few examples of the use of this virtually ubiquitous sentiment, Mike and the Mechanics in referring to family communication say "We all talk a different language, talking in defense..." The Moody Blues express the emotion, "How can I tell you all the things inside my head?" Hothouse Flowers say "What in the world caused this distance? And what in the world hurt our hearts? And what are we to do about it? And what are we to start? We have an answer and it is language, it might be silence, it might be words. And it includes some understanding, and it includes the will to learn to be talking, talking, talking one tongue...as it gets more complicated, simplicity must arise..." All of these must certainly apply also to the desire to express ourselves to the family of humankind of which we are all a part.

Although it is difficult enough to be able to express thoughts and feelings using our own native language (though it is obviously our goal), not being able to communicate and share joys, delights, sorrows, and aspirations at all with those of different linguistic backgrounds should surely be even more distressing to those who lay claim to a universal love.

Even (or perhaps especially) CHILDREN are capable of grasping the absolute logic and necessity for such a decision and for effort being taken towards its achievement.

Perhaps the greatest benefit for a world language is not the knowledge we know it would bring, but rather the knowledge, insights, and understanding which we do not know.

Indeed what contributions may be missing to our discussions and thoughts of reality (whether in our media reports, literature, etc.) How little, for example, do the East and West understand each other--and how much could they each benefit from a better understanding.

One further emotional appeal (pertaining to this specific campaign) relates to the aesthetic quality of using the medium of language to itself bring about the desired world language (by passing on the idea through language). That it is to be a universal language should also be confirmed by a universal participation in its establishment. Also, the method of democratic participation and use of friendly persuasion in spreading the idea should also augur well for the hopes of the language to itself foster peace and understanding.

Benefits of the Campaign's Specific methods

There is a difficulty in expecting all individuals to spontaneously agree to learn a dominant market language like English or to learn an invented language intended to become a universal language such as Esperanto.

Just like it is too much to ask for one country to disarm itself while others have not, it is difficult to expect some individuals to commit to learning a potential candidate for a universal language such as Esperanto, when it has not been chosen as an official language. The important thing then is not to work for piecemeal treaties and protocols, but to work for a comprehensive "disarmament" or in this case, universal linguistic disarmament (i.e., making an official global decision). Of course these examples are not the same, and there are currently merits for learning languages such as Esperanto (including advancing the idea we are here proposing (albeit with an invented language focus)).

However, we have to get to the point where the forces supporting an international language are not merely either due solely to market forces (which is clearly insufficient (at least alone) to universally consolidate itself) or solely to individual initiative (as in expecting everyone to take the great effort to learn Esperanto on their own in the vague hope that it MAY become an international language, but rather where the forces include global political consolidation of a particular language (as various nations have demonstrated their success in consolidating a local language as the official national language)).

In order to get to this point, we must spread the idea (and studying languages is not necessary for all to do in order to take part in spreading the idea) and build public momentum to urge our leaders to take the steps to meet with other world leaders in making such a decision--based on the advice of eminent scholars in various disciplines.

Also, this method should help us get to such a decision as quickly as possible. This is particularly necessary, not only that we should partake of the benefits described here, but also given that as we allow time to go by, there is more information accumulating which we may later need to translate, thus adding to our difficulties if another language is chosen than the one we are currently using. Also, the longer we wait, the more resources we waste in language learning, instead of other more productive purposes.

(Potential) Costs and Concerns

Loss of Jobs in Some Sectors/Relocation of Workers

Due to Less Need for Language Professions

Some who are in the language profession--translation, language teaching, etc.--might fear that their livelihood would be in jeopardy

The important thing to consider is that while their professions may in the long run be jeopardized (though the purpose of their important professions would be advanced by eliminating their need), the implementation of such a universal language program would likely occur over such an extended period that those currently in the profession would not need to fear losing their livelihood (and future generations would be alerted ahead of time to the need to adjust their careers if necessary).

It should also be pointed out that though the need for instruction in and translation into other foreign languages (besides the chosen universal language) will indeed drop (which is a good thing for the society as resources are freed up for other purposes), there will inevitably still remain some need for these professions, as people will still in some cases want to gain access to the languages surely to continue to be used in intimate day-to-day situations (if not in trade, scientific articles, etc.) of people in other countries (or of language minorities within their country). Moreover, if a language is chosen other than a current dominant lingua franca (e.g., English), then translation and language instruction would certainly need to continue for a time in the dominant lingua franca as well (if it is different than the native language).

However, despite all these possibilities for additional language study, the NEED to learn additional languages would eventually be eliminated.

In the unlikely event that jobs would be lost, the respective governments (perhaps aided by the international community) could even conceivably compensate or retrain those losing such jobs. The potential economic benefits to the respective countries should overcome any unwillingness to compensate such individuals.

However, again, it is highly doubtful that any implementation would occur which would not give time for prospective teachers, translators, etc., to change their professional choices if deemed necessary (older teachers, translators, etc., would in all likelihood not see the language take firm root (whether in implementation in schools or in the likely more distant future when the language would be viable for mass use) in their time if the choice will be an invented language, nor would the issue change their situation much in many cases if the universal language were to be an already dominant language such as English).

It is the elimination of the intermediary role which is desired, not the elimination of the welfare of the current intermediary people.

Due to Increased Immigration (and “Brain Drain”)

Workers in economically strong countries may be concerned that as a result of more people abroad having a greater ability to acquire proficiency in a language of use domestically, more immigrants may enter their country and compete with their own jobs. Likewise those in economically weaker countries may be concerned that they would see an outflow of their most qualified workers to the richer countries (i.e., “brain drain”).

It should be pointed out that even if this did cause a nation to increase its immigration, opportunities for emigration would also be greater.

In addition to the fact that increased competition is ultimately a good thing, as is the mixing of peoples with their various cultures, knowledge, and heritage, measures could and indeed should be taken to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated by the international community to prevent great imbalances in the international flow of human resources (e.g., by adding financial incentives for workers to stay in or emigrate to poorer countries).

Added Burdens for Language Minority Groups

For cultures where instruction in both a local and national language is desired, then the adoption of a universal auxiliary language may admittedly add an added burden of needing to learn yet another language.

However, some language minorities could conceivably either be phased out of instruction in their native language, or, if preservation of the local language is upheld as a priority, the learning of the national language could be abandoned as more venues (such as in voting, etc.) increasingly used the international language. If it were actually deemed necessary to continue language in all three languages, then this could be done in order to give the language minority access to their own community’s heritage, that of the nation of which they are a part, and to that of the global community of which they are also a part.

Loss of Local (and Even National) Languages (see Diversity section)

Just as the existence of official (or effectively official) national languages can encourage the eventual loss of local languages (though this does not occur overly swiftly where proper attitudes and methodology are used), so too will it be likely for the official international language.

However, this need not (and should not) be implemented in a manner where extinction occurs so rapidly that the transmission of its culture has no time to be incorporated into the international language (and before linguists have a chance to catalogue its features). This could indeed be a loss, as generations find themselves unable to pass on their cherished values, wisdom, and innovations to the next generations. However, if the program is implemented such that native languages are respected, this extinction should not occur prematurely (if at all). The whole concept of allowing the choice of an international language to be globally democratic should reinforce this respect for speakers of minority languages, particularly perhaps if a culturally neutral language such as Esperanto were to be chosen, in that all would approach the international

language on an equal basis with a say in its choice (as opposed to national situations where language minorities may have had no say in the choice of their nation's national language nor had the legitimacy of their language acknowledged by such processes).

Of course this idea does nothing to prevent anyone from preserving their language, but it is admitted that the forces at play (with or without an international language) tend to lead eventually to the loss of certain languages.

It should be pointed out that although the evolution of a language over time allows it to embody culture, cultures are always changing (as are languages), so preserving them indefinitely has no real intrinsic value. Such languages can show linguists what is possible with language (though it may eventually be possible to ascertain this more accurately through other means)--but the languages need not be living in order to do that (as long as there was sufficient time to catalogue its features). A language can also show the values historically embodied in its users' culture, but again the language need not be living in order to do that) except to the extent that sufficient time is allowed for cataloguing its features.

Added Burdens to Schools...

...in Countries where the Current Dominant Lingua Franca is taught as a Second Language (if the Universal Language Chosen was not the Same as this Dominant Language)

Some added complexity would temporarily occur in nations seeking to educate children in a new world language while still wishing to further educate their populace at least for a time in the already existing dominant lingua franca or lingua francas.

In any case, the need for more than one auxiliary language (if there is such a need at all) would eventually be phased out (assuming the agreement made by all the nations was a solid one on which nations would not renege--as we are here advocating).

Moreover, as the universal language became internalized by the children (and used in the general society), its knowledge would become more automatic, and explicit study of it would become less necessary (except perhaps for some written grammar (if a different style is involved), literature, etc.), thus freeing up resources for other more intrinsically valuable subjects.

However, despite any reservations such as are discussed above, in order for all countries to be willing to come to the table to discuss and agree to teach an international language (by feeling it is sufficiently *their* international language), we must admit that the possibility must remain open to a different language being chosen (whatever the preferences of the individual or government in such a situation). The country would have the opportunity to express its preferences in such an international forum making the decision, and its reasons may win out in the choice. However, again, the possibility that a different language is chosen is a necessity for negotiation (and some countries may even favor such a change if the universal language choice were easier to learn for the masses of their people).

...in Countries where the Dominant Lingua Franca is Already the Native Language (e.g., English is the Native Language) (and a Different Language is Chosen for the Universal Language)

In some sense, it would be an admitted burden for schools currently not in any urgent need to educate all its citizens in a second language (as in many countries where English is natively spoken) to suddenly have to do so.

Of course such countries currently recognize the need for its citizens to have awareness of other cultures through access to other languages (though the need would be lessened in terms of doing this through language in the future when a truly international language became consolidated). Moreover, many of these countries already do have some foreign language requirements anyways. The choice of a universal language would only alter the emphasis on which language was taught (giving time in implementation for most would-be educators to adjust their career choice to a study of the universal language).

Bilingual programs (for immigrants and language minorities) in such countries might also be temporarily taxed by such a universal language choice in that before immigrant children would come with a ready knowledge of the universal language and before teachers of the mainstream programs could become sufficiently proficient in educating pupils in the universal language, bilingual programs would need to have the added responsibility of separately teaching immigrant children the universal language (assuming it is determined that native language instruction (or specialized simplified instruction) would be helpful in learning it and sufficient resources could be provided for it).

However, eventually the need for finding bilingual teachers (in those places and cases where bilingual education was determined to help children transition into the country's language) would be made easier since the bilingual teachers which would be required as the program got under sway--would be of only one language group (i.e., teachers having knowledge of the national and international languages). The immigrants could be taught as one group the country's native language using their proficiency in the international language as needed to do so. Thus all immigrants could eventually be accommodated in one program (and would only need to take special separate classes on the country's native language (rather than in all subjects) if the other subjects were taught in the universal language).

Even if the mainstream classes were not yet ready to be taught in the universal language, immigrant children would find that they would already come ready prepared to communicate their basic needs by their foreknowledge of the universal language. They would also not be as socially excluded as a result (since it is assumed that they would have learned some of this universal language in their own country before emigrating). Moreover, they would feel that it is not only *they* who were learning the language, but rather everyone learning the *world* language which was designed for all. Such benefits would make the schools' work easier as well.

As the universal language became internalized by the children (and used in the general society), its knowledge would become more automatic for both immigrants and native students, and explicit study of it would become less necessary (except perhaps for some written grammar (if a different style is involved), literature, etc.), thus freeing up resources for other more intrinsically valuable subjects.

However, despite any reservations such as are discussed above, in order for all countries to be willing to come to the table to discuss and agree to teach an international language (by feeling it is sufficiently *their* international language), we must admit that the possibility must remain open to a different language being chosen (whatever the preferences of the individual or government in such a situation). The country would have the opportunity to express its preferences in such an international forum making the decision, and its reasons may win out in the choice. However, again, the possibility that a different language is chosen is a necessity for negotiation.

The Possibility that the Language Choice Would not be the one Hoped For (Whether for Users of Dominant Languages such as English or Users of an Invented Language such as Esperanto) (see also Objections and Admitted Partisans)

By allowing the representative global community to democratically select the universal language, there exists the possibility that another language would be chosen besides a language currently dominant on the international scene (such as English). Those living where such a language is already readily taught (whether as a first or second language) may not be readily willing to give up their current dominance (and ease at having access to such a language already). However, they must admit that only a democratic decision would make any universal language (including their own) to be fully consolidated universally. Besides, such a choice would not require them to necessarily learn the language (if it is indeed different than the language(s) with which they are familiar), as the transition might take place over a long period of time (eliminating any need for current generations to learn the language).

However, the greater the delay in facing this inevitable necessity, the more information that accumulates in such a dominant language which may later need to be translated into a potentially different universal language.

Likewise those partisans of Esperanto or other invented languages might conceivably see another language chosen besides their own favored one, given that if they want to get to the table, they must allow the possibility that an existing language is chosen since we can only operate on democratic principles. Although it may not be considered ideal, whatever the language finally chosen (including existing an one), each culture could still express their ideas in the language, given the flexible nature of language. These proponents would thus find their dreams realized by the opportunity for such a choice to be made and an international language brought about (as well as greater chances that an invented language would be chosen).

Difficulty in Changing the Language Later if the International Community is not Currently Sufficiently Prepared to Make an Ideal Choice (see Inertia section)

Despite the concern that the international community may not currently be in the best position to make a choice about a universal language (or that it would make one too hastily), it may be that consolidating the world community into one language would make the coordination of changing the language later MORE feasible (if this were to occur for some reason).

Exposure to Unpleasant Ideas by Greater Access to Others (see Objections section)

For those who would be reluctant to give their posterity the shock of the new ideas to which they would have ready access from other countries and language speakers, it might be pointed out that such information will inevitably reach them, and might be considered as the necessary growing pains of the coming of age of humanity.

Moreover, with a universal language would also come the possibility to influence what we perceive to be negative forces elsewhere, such that we might be able to persuade the possessors of such unhealthy ideas to change their own negative behaviors (as perhaps only such an encounter could make possible). We might also find that it is our own maladaptive ideas which we will come to change as a result of such an exchange.

Questions on the Existence of International Language

Don't We Already Have an International Language? (English)

English has indeed in some ways filled the gap pending the choice of an official universal language (e.g., in many Internet settings, scientific articles, air traffic control, etc.). However, though English may in some ways be a lingua franca, it is obviously not accepted sufficiently to have become mandated education in all primary schools in all countries. And as an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* November 2000 issue argued (see <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2000/11/wallraff.htm>), it has hardly spread as widely or deeply as many may imagine. For example, though it is used in virtually every regional and international forum around the world as one of the official languages, it is not even the most common 2nd language nor the most common language totaling native speakers or both native and 2nd language speakers, as Chinese (Mandarin) tops the list in all of these categories. Nor is its use spread to a wide number of countries as an official language or with many native speakers, etc. See the Statistics section.

For different reasons (distaste with perceptions of historical or current cultural hegemony, a complex language with inconsistent spelling, non-uniform affixes and roots, etc.), many nations may not be willing to commit to English--at least for the education of all of their children.

It is possible that such nations could be won over to the idea of English if they are not already--by the argument for example that its existing spread lends itself to be the final choice, but in order for some language to take root--including English--assuming we respect democracy for all (and are not going to see an English speaking country physically conquer the world and force all of its subjects to learn English), we must remain open to the possibility that another language will be chosen. If not, we are not only being divisive, but ineffective in seeing our own dreams realized.

Only upon making a **universal**, **representative**, and **democratic** choice, made after deliberative study among experts across various disciplines, which genuinely allows for the free choice of any language, will the peoples and governments of the world be willing to carry out the requirement for all of the children in their countries to learn such an official second language.

For those who think the market forces are sufficient to consolidate English eventually, we ought to consider that with changing economic winds as well as political forces, we may yet see another change from English (as the past has seen changes from French (or in some places from Russian) and from further back (in the West) from Arabic, Latin, etc. The most populous and up-and-coming nations of China if not India might conceivably upset the equilibrium in the future, for example, as might other changing political and economic factors (and then subsequently change again).

It is only global political action which can resolve this international question firmly. Language policy is able to effect changes (as demonstrated even at the inadequate national level) or it would not be adopted (as it has been on the national scale).

Many countries have national language policies to encourage the spread of an official national language over defacto market conditions, and though such policies are inadequate given that their decision-making structures do not represent the oneness

and interconnectedness of all humanity (and they will continually face immigration of minorities unfamiliar with their country's national language), they nevertheless testify to the efficacy of having some language policy--how much more so would this be at a global level with its comprehensive reach.

It is clear that de facto conditions are not adequate nor will they be sufficient to establish any language as a universal language unless a global representative political decision is made and universally implemented.

If There Isn't an International Language Now, Why Isn't One Already Existing? (See also "About this Campaign" for History/UN question)

Wasn't a Universal Language Already Tried (and It Failed)?

For those who dismiss the idea of an invented language (though again, it wouldn't necessarily need to be an invented one) for the reason of its lack of taking adequate root (though such languages as Esperanto have made significant accomplishments), the only reason they haven't taken enough root is because it hasn't been committed to and backed up by the governments of the world who by a global decision could ensure all people of the marketability and even necessity of learning such a language (though the changes would surely need to take place over generations). Then those contemplating learning an invented language (if an invented one were chosen) would of course need not fear an inadequate pool of users for it.

If This Idea is so Great, Why Hasn't It Caught On?

There are many potentially win-win situations in the world (such as world peace through global security, free trade, etc.) which have encountered resistance for a variety of reasons, some of them short-sighted or provincial, others due to the difficulties of transition, and others due to other interconnected imbalances needing to be first redressed, but in the end, as the details are consultatively determined in an ongoing historical process, the benefits become apparent to all.

A few vested interests, such as those insisting on one particular language as the choice, may also be hindering its acceptance. It stands to reason, however, that if we trust in a global representative and democratic process that we will be willing, at least for the time-being, to submerge our preferences for a specific language (whether existing or invented), and get the idea out, as this can now best ensure that we are not bogged down in specific debates. If we show preferences in spreading the idea, this may minimize the universality of participation which we are seeking.

While the proposed solution of an international auxiliary language is widely appealing to many if not most of those who have heard of the idea and considered it, the concept has yet to be adequately spread and duly considered by the peoples of the world in order that we may, as momentum builds, through our Parliaments, Councils, or Congresses, insist upon the holding of a world convocation to secure the choice of such a language.

We have seen the development of many other global institutions in recent times which were also not thought of as possible earlier. Yet with the persistence of their advocates (and the existence of timely circumstances such as we have now for a universal auxiliary language), they were able to bring about their dream. In any case, we ask those wishing to remain as skeptics to at least pass on the idea, since it requires very little effort to do their necessary part.

Why Hasn't the United Nations Worked on This?

The United Nations has been called upon to investigate such a choice by calling upon a representative meeting to be held with experts in linguistics, economics, media, education, etc. However, for whatever reasons, it has not (yet) done so--perhaps not perceiving it a high priority or believing the public sufficiently interested in seeing it come about. This campaign is designed to produce a ground-up swell of support to show we do care. Again, it doesn't take much to support this project, if you believe in it.

Another possible forum for such a decision would be at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organization of national democratic congresses and parliaments throughout the world. As they represent the world's people--perhaps even better than the United Nations as it stands at present--this would be an appropriate forum for such an issue to be brought up. Eventually, we may appeal to the IPU and/or the United Nations (using the email signatures here as well as encouraging an email/letter-writing campaign). However, our current priority is to spread the idea among the public.

Hasn't Anyone Already Researched This?

Many people have researched it, though the idea gets relatively little attention, even or perhaps especially by those in the field of language policy (which this clearly must be if it is to take effect).

It is indeed a great project and beyond any one person's abilities to achieve alone. Therefore, whatever the research presently gone or going into it, we can dedicate some of our time to encourage others to consider the idea and discuss it with others, since we need more people to support the idea (as well as research it). Once public and media attention and funding go into this, then more research will be possible. In fact, dwelling too much on such research before the idea of the issue and emphasis on its importance is sufficiently diffused among the public and world's leaders, may even be a misallocation of (limited) resources. We have to first get the idea out.

We don't need to abandon the languages we need right now or even take time to learn potential candidates for a universal language such as Esperanto (though of course this may have its benefits). Even if a world language were chosen tomorrow, we still need to continue for quite some time with the work we have today. But along with our other present obligations, it can't hurt to spread the idea.

Foreseeable problems and objections (see also (Potential) Costs)

Perceptions of It Being Utopian or Too Difficult to Achieve

Isn't this Just an Utopian Dream?

Perhaps the greatest reason for resistance to this idea (or any great idea) is a lack of belief in its possibility (as well as a credible plan of implementation).

As to the first point, the self-defeating belief that humans are inherently aggressive (and thus incapable of coordinating mutually beneficial arrangements for the benefit of all or achieving the "utopian" ideals of peace) is itself among the greatest barriers to peace. This fully applies to the concept of a unifying world language as well.

There are many signs that justify belief that the time is ripe for such a language and that it is possible now.

We might look at how many other regional and international alliances which seemed to be but dreams have and are coming true, for example.

Recent achievements such as the euro in Europe; economic, political, and civil regional and international cooperation, etc. testify more lucidly now than ever to the possibility of people achieving such win-win collaborations in this age as a universal language offers.

The ultimate sensibility of free trade (another *ultimately* win-win or "positive sum gain" situation), while similarly accompanied by many legitimate concerns which must be dealt with (e.g., increases in violation of human rights abroad, environmental degradation, loss of jobs as its implementation brings added competition, etc.), should win out eventually, as it already has to lesser degrees in nation-states and prior levels of political organization. The same can be true for free trade of ideas by a common auxiliary language.

Or, if a unilateral disarmament can be arranged among all the nations (with international monitoring and strong punitive measures against transgressors), everyone would benefit by the nations resources not going into an industry which did not actually produce something inherently useful to people. The same can be said with the benefits which will accrue when nations begin to realize that by disarming their insistence on a particular language (or by showing apathy by not getting involved in the issue), all their people would benefit by the release of energies spent into people "arming" themselves with inherently useless knowledge of various languages' grammars, their multiple vocabulary to express the same concept, etc. Redundancy will be eliminated, and people can work on things of benefit to humanity.

Such solutions, while of mutual benefit of all, are often among the ideas which receive the most resistance, because they seem too good to be true! But it is indeed the case that many good things are actually easy to achieve and of benefit to all.

The whole idea of learning multiple languages shows sometimes people do TOO much work, without taking a small amount of time and energy to consider with forethought and vision how to resolve things such that their lives and those of others could make their lives *easier*--even much, much easier.

Although it May Sound Like a Good Feasible Idea, There Needs to Be a Credible Plan that can Bring it About--Without Expecting the Impossible.

When telling others the idea, this obstacle of people believing it too idealistic may be common. This defeatist attitude, itself a barrier to the peace which such a language could help better secure, can be fairly readily overcome by the consideration that agreeing to do our small though significant part to pass on the idea to a few people is hardly a sacrifice to make, especially when we realize the pleasure of being able to take part in a movement which may in fact make a significant historical contribution in leading toward the alleviation of suffering faced by learners, communicators, and institutions throughout the world by making possible the acceptance and subsequent dissemination of such a language. We can continue learning or teaching the market language(s) of choice, while we seek to take some small steps to save future generations the great trouble of needing to learn too many languages or learning them too late after their language-learning prime has been reached.

Unlike some Esperantists who encourage others to learn their invented language, we are only asking individuals to pass on the IDEA of a universal language being chosen, whether an existing or invented one (and eventually to bring our views for the need for a choice to the attention of our world's leaders). Incidentally, this is not at all to disparage the great work done by Esperantists and the like, in that they have developed a viable, culturally neutral, and relatively simple invented language as a proposed means of world communication and gained valuable experience in its development for the sake of the world community. And indeed their language might be chosen (or a variation of it). But it is the belief of this campaign, that we must appeal to the masses of humanity who may be willing to sign on to the idea of a universal language, but who lack the time or patience to learn a language--particularly when they have no guarantee it will become accepted by a wider audience.

The sacrifice involved in this project is minimal--both for those passing on the idea, and for the eventual adoption of such a language. Rather, we believe it is a solution which unlike many other reform ideas does not require a heavy outlay of funds, etc. but should rather free up many resources throughout the WHOLE world. It is an idea which you should find very few object to since it really is not a partisan issue--particularly once our listeners fully understand what the idea is.

As many readily accept this idea in principle, why not enlist them to help us to spread the idea and play their part to pass the idea on to a few others? Even if they think the idea is hopelessly utopian, it cannot hurt for them to lift their finger to tell one or a few people about it, considering that they may rightfully look back with their grandchildren and consider themselves to have been however humble agents of change in a great world process of multiplying benefits to all.

So many of us witness great achievements of the past, and tell ourselves how much we wished we would have a chance to be a part of something so just, so ahead of the time...Here is such a chance! And it won't necessarily involve vast amounts of your time (though greater commitment could help it along).

This is not hyperbole...this is truth of the matter. How can we afford not to try this small sacrifice for the sake of all humanity?

Isn't it Too Much to Expect People to Learn a Whole New Language?

The point here is that we are NOT expecting people to learn a new language now. What we are asking people to do is pass on the idea of this language being selected through a global political process.

Once the governments agreed on a language, then they would begin teaching the language to children in schools (and others would perhaps also become interested in studying it since it would be clear that the universal language was important to learn since it had been accepted and was indeed going to be taught in all the schools).

It is not much to ask people to pass on the idea to a few others and/or to write to their elected representatives.

Wouldn't a Language Need to First Be or Become Dominant in Order to Be Made Official?

A world commission might indeed take into account the existing spread of a language to be in its favor. In that case, the result of the world decision would be the consolidation of this reality. If, however, the world community builds sufficient will on this issue and/or considers the choice of an existing language inherently limiting or agreement on one intractable, a language could surely be invented and then subsequently consolidated. If other political results can be successfully achieved which while depending on need (which already exists in this case as well) does not depend on conditions universally currently favoring its adoption (e.g., anti-segregation laws in the U.S.), why should we need to view language policy as being dependent on the language already existing? The success of Hebrew being resuscitated for use in Israel should provide a good example that where there is a will, there is a way. We need to build among the peoples of the world the notion that we are world citizens and that this a universal auxiliary language is a viable and necessary solution. Again, the choice need not be an invented language if agreement was instead made on an existing language; but the possibility of such a choice may help lead to SOME language being chosen.

Every Great Change Happens Naturally Based on Need; Won't This Only Succeed When People Come to the Point of Wanting to Solve This Problem on their Own Initiative?

Well, first of all, many HAVE come to the point of wanting to solve the problem. That doesn't mean work won't be involved. This is the case for any political decision. You can't wait for every single individual to consider it a need in order for it to take root.

Also, just as we don't wait for our children to grow up before we teach them the skills they need for life and their jobs, just as doctors do not refrain from giving medicine until the patient is about to die (nor do reasonable patients wait for such a condition), etc., we can through law, education, etc., make efforts to avoid the need becoming too great.

But again, how do we judge that the need is not great enough already? Do we need to wait until all other people say it is a need? I think people already see it is a need; they just haven't thought about such a global solution or if they have, they haven't taken some small steps to bring it about). It is already costing us lots of money to translate and teach languages to natives and immigrants, already continuing distrust between peoples by not having one, etc. As human beings we have the choice to address this--

just as we do any illness we find we have--while the time is ripe.

Just as certain groups had the vision to see that regional or international developments such as the Earth Summit, World Trade Organization, the Euro, etc. were necessary and worked for its development, so too is it with this international cause where thinking globally can quite readily be manifested into acting locally.

The efforts made for a European Union, etc. had begun a long time ago, but we cannot say that these people a hundred years ago wasted their time since they started the process and put the idea into people's minds so that the PROCESS could advance to the point it has now advanced today.

Likewise the idea for an international language has been with us for quite a while. For example, Dr. Zamenhof in the mid 1800's advanced the idea of a universal language--himself developing a potential candidate.

But rather than waiting even longer for it to come true, we need to take actions to manifest it as soon as possible.

All Languages Developed Over a Long Period of Time; the Same Will Be True for This Future Language.

As the section on the effectiveness of language policy argues, language policy IS able to effect changes in language behavior by allocating the necessary resources for instruction. Obviously children ARE shaped by what they learn in classes. They would indeed be able to pick up such a language if the governments can agree to teach it in the schools. And eventually, as with the evolution of national languages being instituted through language policy, its use can become widespread enough for broad use in the society. We need not wait forever for this to happen.

As to doubts that an invented language with a relatively short history such as Esperanto could ever adequately express human thought, or take root, the following provide some responses to this concern (from an Esperantist point of view) which explain how Esperanto, an invented language, already within only a hundred years or so has demonstrated its ability to serve (as could all human languages (which have had a chance to mature over multiple generations) to express all human thought.

<http://www.esperanto.net/veb/faq-9.html>
<http://ttt.esperanto.org/us/USEJ/world/kontraux.html>
<http://infoweb.magi.com/~mfettes/psyres.html>

(Again, our campaign does not endorse a specific language or kind of language, but we do believe all options should remain open--thus we encourage spreading the idea of the possibility of an invented language also, given that some are not familiar with this possibility. However, we are non-committal on this point and also believe the option for an existing language should also exist--if one can be agreed upon by the world's representative leaders.)

Isn't Language Policy Ineffective in Changing Language Behavior?

No. Why otherwise would so many countries dedicate so many resources to it?

Israel for example developed the modern version of Hebrew which had been essentially extinct, but the government resurrected it in a short period of time.

To take an example on an even larger scale, the Chinese government established one dialect (or language) as its official national (spoken) variety, and though formerly peoples in communities nearby could not understand one another, through the implementation of instruction in the national standard, intercommunication became more possible.

Clearly, policy does influence language behavior.

Of course, it will take some time for such a language to take root, but if many countries agree to it, this will be easier to do. It is just like the other international achievements and institutions which have been brought about with a great deal of effort.

For those who would say that the above countries shared common cultures and aims, etc. and thus could not be achieved in an international setting even with an auxiliary language as our campaign supports (i.e., not replacing the mother tongues), it should be pointed out that not only do such countries achieving this success in standardization possess their own very different cultures, but that the whole idea of a universal language is indeed that we must work to build our collective identity as world citizens with common aspirations for the welfare of all (even if this includes very different cultures) in order to confirm this process toward a world language. However, a good idea does not require complete agreement to be achieved (just as many may have objected for partisan reasons to the existence of the United Nations). Moreover, a certain level of unity of thought is not only somewhat of a prerequisite for a world auxiliary language (though it does not require complete unity of thought), but we must first have the existence of a world language in order to bring about greater unity of thought. We will find our identity as world citizens strengthened once we can share a common language since unity has less potential to be built without a common means of communication.

But there is a lot of work to be done within countries (and still surely would be even if the governments could all agree) in order to bring about the political will (just as is required for national linguistic policy). We have the blessing to participate in bringing this great achievement about it. That's what the glory of the "fight" is all about (in this as in other areas of life). The rest is up to us.

Language Would Change or Take on Local Varieties Preventing Mutual Comprehension Despite Language Policy.

Although language academies have had mixed success in altering speech and writing behavior (e.g., in seeking to eliminate foreign terms from entering the language, etc.), obviously it has been possible to a degree for national languages to maintain their coherence despite new additions of words, etc. However, it is true that language inevitably changes, and that is just as true with national languages as well. We don't expect, nor is it necessary, for the international language to remain fossilized forever in one form.

However, with media, interpersonal communications, and travel uniting the world, the former reasons for differences in dialects leading to separate languages, are no longer so applicable today. Of course, new words will be added as conditions and technology change, but this is as true for national languages as it will be for an international language. We also do not find so many examples of language divergence in a nation's dialects such that a serious crisis occurs. In cases where there is social isolation or internecine strife, this divergence may occur, and other measures may need to be taken to ensure that language divergence as a symptom of social incoherence is dealt with at its root.

However, again, everything will inevitably change, and this must be dealt with.

If an invented language were chosen (or any language with a predictable means of adding new words in a simple manner), it may be easier to ensure that borrowings do not skew its simplicity.

Just as whole languages can be instituted through policy and instruction (see language policy section), certainly, some effort should be successful in ensuring some *elements* of language remain uniform through instruction--assuming the language instruction operates on principles consistent with spoken language.

This is an area requiring further study, but it is not an insurmountable obstacle, just as English evolving in different varieties as an international language need not lead to mutual incomprehensibility--especially if instructional and media works works for standardization (as whole national languages such as Hebrew may have required at their institution).

Perceived Impossibility in Coming to Agreement On and Implementing a Global Policy on Language (Given Entrenched Group Conflicts)?

Some might express their belief thusly: “One cannot separate the discussion of a universal language from political and racial issues. The oneness of humanity is a prerequisite to a universal language (and, not the other way around).”

To a degree, peace and unity will indeed be preconditions for a universal auxiliary language (though once there is sufficient momentum for it, the choice of a universal language will also consolidate unity and peace).

But a look at history should demonstrate that an incomplete unity could be further solidified by the adoption of a lingua franca (and does not require uniform support before being implemented).

If we do not have faith or hope that it can really be overcome, or if we wait in taking steps to form sufficient global associations with those of a like mind in order to curb those admitted inevitably ever-existing selfishness of certain individuals, we would never get anything done.

The agreement on a world language, like free trade, the euro, etc. is in the sufficient best interest of a sufficient number of people, and like free trade, as we are seeing, is itself possible without complete unity among human beings (though it was to a degree a precondition) (and also like free trade, those in existing professions which may be adversely affected, compensation and assistance may need to be provided for those needing to transfer work--though again, with the choice of a universal language, the change could not become immediate, as children would need to learn the language first, incoming college students would be aware of an anticipated drop in the need for study of other lingua francas, etc.).

However far off it may be (whether as an auxiliary or single language), the choice of a universal language will unequivocally foster the oneness of mankind and spreading the idea will not only help toward this but will also foster the vision of and momentum for political and racial unity which as some point out, somewhat of a precondition for its eventual acceptance.

However you look at it, though, one should acknowledge that part of this anticipated maturity of humankind will be created as we begin to recognize our own grass-roots role in having the power to bring it about. Waiting forever until the magic of the oneness of humanity works (whether this fatalism is secularly and/or religiously based) is a great tragedy. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said on the subject of a fatalistic attitude that time would automatically solve the ills of human beings, “We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people.” (Letter from Birmingham Jail). And although this struggle may not evoke the same sense of urgency and call for justice that the oppression of a long-suffering people does, its potential benefits for people all over the world--including especially its poor--and its bringing a possibility for greater understanding between different races and peoples scattered throughout the world cannot go unheeded by any conscientious person.

The “Zeitgeist” is ready for this change, as we can see by the other global institutions and projects which have been increasingly taken off.

We just can't sit on our hands forever to expect all political and racial strife to go away until the world is ready for a world language. No great and ultimately successful movement has taken such a defeatist position. Besides, spreading the idea of the world language, can itself foster a spirit of racial and political equality by affirming our belief to others that such world policies on language must be democratic (i.e., the language choice might be any accepted by representatives not only from our own country or countries of our own language group) even while we argue that such a decision might include an existing language like English and that whatever the decision, it will also benefit not only countries currently resisting implementation of the dominant language of the day (English), but also those English-speaking countries which face costs of translation, immigration, etc.. This would be true whatever the final choice of the language may be.

The least the naysayers can do is to admit that playing a small part to lift a finger and pass on the idea to at least one other person or preferably a few others is hardly a sacrifice to make toward establishing the utopia often dreamed of by poets and dreamers of past ages.

Doesn't this Need to Be a Grass-Roots Change (i.e., Think Globally but Act Locally)'

Yes, but we must give support to the movement which already exists--as we are seeking to do in this campaign. Not all solutions to problems can be at the grass-roots level (though efforts surely must begin there or be confirmed there), as the acceptance of the need for national, regional, and international institutions demonstrates.

As in all ideas for the betterment of the human race, support for an international language must not only be as grass roots as possible but with a vision and to a level as deep, committed, and spiritual (as well as legalistic) as possible. This includes the recognition that this vision is tied not only to fostering the more efficient economic, political, and technical integration of the planet, but also and as a result for allowing the spiritual integration of the human family into a community of common concern and affection (which is not to say that a common language is sufficient for peace, as many negative examples of those sharing a language will show--but that it will help avoid unnecessary confusion, deliberate misrepresentations by intermediaries, etc.).

This vision and widespread support is necessary in the case of language not only to enable it to be effected into law, and not even only in order to become effectively and duly implemented by its executors (through the teachers, administrators, staff, etc.), but also, as linguistic studies would seem to confirm, for the language to be readily acquired by its learners (the children and other learners) who need to identify with the culture (in this case a world culture) associated with the language in question in order to avoid resistance to learning and/or excessive creation of language divergence

(Of course some divergence might not only be seen as inevitable but also desirable for the chosen language to continue to evolve to incorporate as many features and insights encoded within the native languages of its language learners as is possible and feasible, whether the language chosen is an already existing one or an invented one. This would include an invented language which had sought in its design stage to build as much representation as it could before being potentially accepted by the whole world community, the latter stage being one which would be necessary to reach in order to fully ensure the invented language could indeed become representational and accommodating to the expressive needs and desires of all of its users.)

Wouldn't Such an Agreement Only Be Possible with a Massive Universal Support of the World's People?

No, not exactly.

Though we certainly must build momentum and public opinion--as this project seeks to do--it only stands to reason that we cannot expect to wait for every single human being on earth to consent to embrace a world language (especially while such misunderstandings exist due to a lack of communication), nor is such an impossible utopia necessary for a language to be chosen and implemented by the governments of the world.

The everexisting need for government and enforceable law is itself a sign that human beings cannot be expected to all become perfect and always unanimously united (though governments must indeed rely on there being sufficient public support for their policies).

Every individual may not be willing to accept either the idea and/or to take the sacrifices on their own (especially in the absence of an official policy of the world's governments). However, what we are calling for, is to have the governments work first through preparing future generations for this language (rather than impose it on the adults of today), as children are not only more capable of learning such an additional language, but can be more readily and without complaint be compelled to do so (if the community members (including as much as possible the children themselves) are supportive of this).

In addition not every individual being necessary for this work, not even every single government would need to sign on to it (though it is very necessary that the conference responsible for this decision be as representative as possible, not merely drawing on say Western nations, but including as many countries as possible--in order for its decision to be meaningful and acceptable to the world's people.

Also, as pointed out in the section on complete unity not being necessary as a precondition for the acceptance of a universal language, there is indeed a need to build support for the idea among the masses, not only for emboldening the political representatives of the world toward making a decision to establish such a language, but for success in the implementation of such an eventual decision (see that section for more).

How Can Those in Terrible Poverty Gain Access to a World-Standard Language?

As to those in terrible poverty not having the resources to acquire a world-standard language, of course there may be some truth to this for very poor regions (and hopefully resources can be allocated for their instruction, as the Bretton Woods institutions did for post-World War II Europe and Japan--as such investments in our fellow world citizens end up benefiting everyone). Of course, even national language instruction may be unavailable to these individuals. (Ideally the girls will be given higher priority for education in such cases where limited resources exist, since they will also become the first educators of the children, thus better ensuring that their knowledge will be transmitted to future generations).

However, the fact that not all may receive such education does not mean that it would not be worthwhile for some in such communities to receive it. Many poor stand

immediately to benefit from access to a world-standard language as these skills are welcomed in companies involved in trade, etc. English majors in China, for example, often come from the poor rural areas to learn English in order to eventually either send money back to the community or themselves go back and improve the conditions of their villages which were quite poor (drawing on the money they earn through their use of English). These students often come to study at the sacrifice of many relatives.

Due to a lack of a uniform global policy on language (China had formerly taught Russian, for example), relatively poor, although working adults not only must struggle to learn English in such countries after their prime language-learning age has passed, but also are even pulled to learn different languages (like German or Japanese) to take advantage of opportunities coming their way. What a waste of already limited resources!

This is nothing to speak of the effect in countries which already have access to a fairly international language (albeit unconfirmed by international political consensus) such as English. For example, in the United States, immigrant children--perhaps coming from poor families (especially since education is offered to all, including those whose parents may have arrived illegally)--who because they come from countries which do not instruct in English (and/or because the United States doesn't instruct its citizens in the immigrants' language(s)), face difficulties of learning a language where resources are diffuse (due to there not being enough other children of the same age/language background in every school to provide bilingual education for them (e.g., teachers may have Malayalam, Arabic, Polish, Korean, Gujarati, Serbian, etc. speakers from three grades in one class for perhaps several hours a day--a non-ideal instructive situation, however wonderful the diversity may be). They not only face inadequate instruction tailored to their needs, but also face a strain on social integration (which in turn has its negative effect on learning) as they are only mainstreamed for part of the day and this to the stress of mainstream teachers (and even mainstream children) who have to accommodate their very different levels of understanding and probably sacrifice quality education for the mainstream students as well, as a result). If there were a world language, this dilemma would be avoided for all.

Would our Efforts be Fruitless if an Agreement is not Immediately Made?

Such a campaign lends itself to not building the will for such an eventual and inevitable decision but also, by emphasizing the democratic nature of the decision, helps to build unity among the diverse peoples engaged and interacting in spreading the idea.

As we all use language and can recognize the benefits of such a language, introducing the idea to others is a particularly nice way to make new friends (especially from different backgrounds) and otherwise introduce our other global world citizenship values if desired (a need for a world currency, standard weights and measures, world government, etc.).

However, we need not fear that our efforts will be in vain. Indeed is it even imaginable that humanity generations from now will venture into space and beyond without having coordinated a common medium of communication for its planet's inhabitants? However, as nations debate dividing up space alongside their limited concepts of national boundaries, we shouldn't take for granted that humanity will be wise enough not to bring its linguistic divisions into space as well (as has already occurred). Even though it is surely eventually inevitable to be achieved, we must take the steps to ensure this occurs as rapidly as possible. And, again, very little effort is required to spread the idea to a few others.

Debate about the Form a World Language Should Take

What Suggestions Exist?

Some favor an invented language such as Esperanto (i.e., a language drawing on various languages yet with simple rules without exceptions) for reasons that it could emphasize the diverse ownership of the language by the peoples of the world, eliminate gender bias and grammatical and spelling irregularities by design, and generally be easier to learn, etc. The ease of learning the language (written or spoken) which is particularly possible for invented language could benefit not only the current generation, or even only the immediately succeeding generations, but also even generations in the distant future when the language has become well established. A simple written language would be of benefit in saving time and energy in teaching not only for non-native speakers of this world language but also for native-speaking children who, even if they could already speak the language, would need to learn how to write in the language. A simple language would save many resources for even billions of people in the present and future.

Others may favor an existing language such as English given its already widespread use as a second language in many countries, its extensive body of literature, its large technical vocabulary, etc.

Some may even favor a language like Chinese (being the most spoken language in the world) or any other number of languages.

Factors that Might be Considered in the Choosing of a World Language

The factors that may be considered for a universal language go even beyond considerations of existing spread and simplicity.

While it is well established that language does not control thought at least absolutely (see the many criticisms existing in various linguistic journals and texts against the extreme case of the Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity principle), some languages may offer a greater ability to efficiently express specificity, generality, ambiguity, etc. and allow the ready coining of logically related new words for new concepts. Other languages may also be free of gender and cultural bias.

Some languages may more readily be used in media and technology (e.g., sound recognition, computer keyboards, etc.)

Of concern to many, though perhaps more difficult to quantify is the natural beauty of such a language.

Some wish that such a language not possess complex sounds or grammatical features.

Others may advance certain languages for religious reasons (though obviously for a UNIVERSAL language, such languages might not readily find the sufficient consensus; however, a different universal language would still simplify things for all).

Numerous other factors might be considered, but our purpose here is not to become entrenched in such a discussion, particularly when sufficient public opinion and political consensus have yet to be built to make such a discussion relevant.

Which Form Should the Language Take?

We do not favor a particular language or even a particular kind of language being chosen as the final universal auxiliary language--only that the possibility for an existing or invented language should remain open until the time a decision is made. Nor do we think it is really fruitful for anyone to expound on all their preferences for the choice before we have achieved the task of spreading this issue among the masses and ultimately bringing this issue to the attention of those representative leaders who control the necessary resources which can be allocated to the study of this issue and have the power to make the final decision regarding the choice of and implementation of instruction in the universal auxiliary language of the future.

We leave the decision up to the scholars of various disciplines and democratic representatives of the world's people to decide. Again, this would not establish the hegemony of any particular language over others, but would allow the continued education in peoples' native languages. It is only as a SECOND language for the world that this initiative is concerned and as one which can satisfy the majority of the world's nations/people as ascertained by their elected representatives.

Again, of greatest urgency now is to spread the idea of the universal language rather than seek to detail all of the features such a language would need to have. If we are in a position to assist the research toward the choice of a language, that can be beneficial, but the essential thing now is, building the political will among leaders and the masses who influence them by promoting awareness of the idea and some of its potential benefits rather than getting bogged down in obscure research projects not tied to what is essential for the moment.

We can rest assured that whatever the consultatively-determined decision, if based on sufficient political will, any human language choice (including duly invented ones such as Esperanto) should suffice to express human thought. We just have to get the ball rolling faster such that the idea enters the world-wide public consciousness and that such a decision can be made. Just as the League of Nations set a precedent, if we can get the language issue into public focus, a precedent will be set, regardless of the favorability of the current political climate. If someone sees it as too utopian, it wouldn't hurt for them to just pass it on to at least a few others and ask them to do the same.

Admitted Partisans

We do not wish to imply that individuals do not have the right to keep their opinions about what the language should be, but as in the interests of peace (which is itself related), and the great results which can be obtained, we should be willing to give a little on this so we can then actually get to the table where it can become a reality. This does not mean that we have to give up our concerns, but that we have to be *willing* to change, if required.

Arguing and force cannot and will never achieve the objective, just as world imperialism, by whichever country tried could not be achieved. There must be a unity amidst the great diversity, and the unity which is achieved must accept the great diversity. This can only occur in a democratic consultative fashion where all voices are heard and differences are respected and allowed to remain, but for which, in the final analysis after full consultation occurs, the majority rules--as it must--in setting standards (as long as minority rights such as in preserving their native languages--an issue already facing many countries--is assured).

What we are asking is that the participants in our campaign pass on the idea in a language-neutral fashion. Even presenting our own preferences at this stage to others is distracting to our goal. However, we can keep our own personal preferences to ourselves if we have any and bring them up at the time feedback may be sought by the representatives to such a global body.

We **MUST** believe it is possible and be open to a decision which might imply more sacrifice on the part of our own country or preference than we have anticipated.

Partisans Who Advocate a Particular Language Associated with an Existing Culture

A desire to exert a hegemony of one's own culture is not reasonable--however much that culture may have contributed to civilization--in a world society with each culture having its own right to representation. If the nations of the world want to accept aspects of others' cultures and even (voluntarily) adopt through international agreement a language associated with a particular culture for the international language, that is fine. However, each culture has the right to express its own thought through such a language if it is an existing language which is chosen.

It is clear that force (including even market force) will not be sufficient (at least alone) to consolidate a world language. Some peaceful consensus will have to be achieved. In all likelihood this will involve a good deal of give-and-take in order to achieve the desired goal.

Those Familiar with English Not Willing to Risk a Chance that English is not Chosen

It may be chosen, but then again it may not.

If another language is chosen, the extensive literature in English might need to be translated, but this gives even more reason to get an earlier start for the inevitable day a universal language will be chosen!

Some may fear a democratic choice may lean away from English, but surely they should be able to see the benefits of such a language, even if the final decision is not English.

As for all partisans, one has to be willing to give something up to get something better.

We cannot, if we claim to operate on democratic principles, just accept the status quo or expect that we can change the situation by merely arguing our position to make English the standard. There may be advantages to having this be chosen given the extent of its current use, but English will never be accepted if it is not reinforced also politically, and a standard is officially set. Otherwise, groups will continue to jockey for their own "official" language and will only have at best partial success without their own government being a party to an international agreement (which will feel greater pressure if other countries have signed on to commit to the idea).

Even those with a fixed bias toward English must admit that a world democratic decision which led to English as its choice would consolidate its force and reassure and even force nations to concentrate upon it more seriously. And if it is not chosen, then their aim for posterity being able to readily draw upon and contribute to the resources of the planet will be achieved.

Again, the important thing is to unite the groups regardless of bias (English, French, Esperanto, etc.) toward the holding of such a meeting (and its implied potential of a surrender of their preferences to the considered judgment of the international community).

Partisans of Esperanto (or Other Invented Languages)

Despite the universal aims of Esperanto, there are even some in this movement who can be partisan! Surely those who truly value the aims of Esperanto--the existence of a means for global communication--would find the essence of their dreams realized by the choice of a world language--even if it were not Esperanto but an existing language such as English, etc. And without such a decision being left open-ended, it is highly unlikely that the issue would ever even get to the table!

So, please if you support this campaign, pass on the idea to others (including even mentioning Esperanto), but do not insist that the final choice must be Esperanto. If you do, people may not only disagree with your choice, but they may be led to further doubt its feasibility, whereas if the option is left open, they may be more amenable to its possibility.

Advantages to All of Leaving the Choice of the World Auxiliary Language to a Globally Representative Body

While this effort appreciates the existence of assorted interests seeking to establish their own language of choice (including invented languages), we hope that in a fully democratic spirit, one which includes all of the nations and peoples of the earth (including native peoples), we can all join efforts to establish such a representative body and then, after setting forth our opinions to the relevant body or bodies, abide by their judgement.

Leaving the decision open lends itself to many advantages. Whatever our linguistic preference, we must admit that any language chosen with the representative will to carry it out would be preferable to the current situation. Despite the short-term costs faced for some countries at the prospect of possibly needing to change the choice of the country's auxiliary language (or perhaps in some cases languages), the benefits of such a globally determined decision which would accrue to all in the long term if not the short term, whatever the choice (whether existing or invented), would certainly be higher than for that of maintaining the status quo, both for facilitating communication as well as for assuring the world's people that their competence is trusted and their will is respected whatever their linguistic background, their language of choice is respected for its possible potential as a world language, and the at least relative equality of all languages is established by leaving open such a decision.

Difficulty to Change the Language Later if Needed

(Inertia of Changing a World Language to Another (see also Religious Objections section and Other Inertia section))

The existence of a world language (even if other languages had since been lost) would not prevent humanity's change to a different language in the further future if it were so desired. Given language's subordination to thought, even if only the world language were in existence in the future (and native languages had been lost--though they would probably have been catalogued for posterity's sake by linguists by then), humanity could still either choose to learn dead languages or invent new ones.

Actually, if, for one reason or another (see the "Factors that Might be Considered" section), humanity wished to collectively make a different choice for a universal language at some point in the future after a universal language were chosen, it would actually be easier to coordinate such a change with a world language, given that the world would have since been united (as can be seen by the relative difficulty which the nonexistence of a world language presents to this current effort itself). International education (including such efforts as this one!) could be more readily coordinated to bring about any such subsequent change in the future.

If a language were truly more ideal, humanity would not be prevented from coordinating a change in the future.

For those having religious motivations as to their choice of a language, even if another language were chosen, their own teaching/educational goals would be greatly simplified as their fellow world citizens would all gain ready access to literature which would only need to be kept in one language.

Objections

Religious Objections

(see also Inertia of Changing a World Language)

Doesn't the Bible (or Qur'án) Warn Against a World Language (Babel)?

Pride was the Cause of the Punishment, not the Possession of a Common Language

No. Even in a strictly literal reading of the Bible (Genesis 11:1-9) (or perhaps also of the Qur'án 16:29) dealing with a common language, God's multiplying the languages into mutual unintelligibility arose after the people were recorded to have sought to build a tower into the heavens, and was due to their unbounded aspirations (in wishing to go into heaven and/or making a name for themselves, according to the Biblical version) and not by a having common language in and of itself.

The confusion of languages was as a result of and not in any way described as being a *cause* of man's pride.

The Common Language was a Pre-Existing Condition

God had already allowed a common language to the people prior to the time of Babel, without any trouble (even Adam and Eve, if we take the account literally, must obviously have shared a common language).

Even today, we share common languages and even a de facto international language without any trouble being shown by God (rather, an absence of a more strongly consolidated language is causing problems).

The Common Language was not Objected to by God

Had God intended His creatures to seek to avert the sharing of a common language before Babel, He would surely have made this clear to these people in order that His punishment could be justified. However, such a warning was clearly not given according to the Bible. Therefore, the lack of complicity of the people prior to this in forming the common language they shared (it was actually created by God) should show that it was not in and of itself the common language which was condemned but the people's use of it. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that a common language now would be forbidden.

God Could Stop It

If God wanted to stop us from developing a common language (which has already occurred to a certain degree), He of course can (as a literal account of Babel would seem to indicate He could). It will certainly become evident through no need for our own intervention, if God wishes to prevent this from occurring.

We might compare the story to a case where a child is allowed to play with a toy. For some time there is no problem, so it is permitted. When the child shows it cannot play responsibly with the toy, the toy is taken away. However, particularly since an infallible Deity allowed it originally, it should be clear that it need not be prohibited forever. (It was actually never prohibited anyhow in this story; just their ability to speak it was limited).

Unwisdom of Attempting Intervention Based on Prophecies

Allowing our own human and fallible interpretations of Scripture in such matters which are not explicitly spelled out can lead to mistaken and even disastrous policies.

Superstitious, unwarranted, and unauthoritative extrapolations from Holy Scripture which debar humanity from beneficial solutions to mankind's difficulties, are not only manifestly unjust in and of themselves for the deprivation of its potential benefactors, but, it may be fair to say for those of us holding religious views, that such obstructionism will not go unnoticed from the judgment of an All-loving but Just Creator Who wishes the best for all His servants.

God May Welcome It

If Babel was a literal account of events, it is quite possible that the conditions (and motivations--which at the time were listed as being due to pride) may have since changed. Humanity has, with years of mutual unintelligibility been able to form its own cultures in isolation. Now we have the opportunity to draw upon that diversity for the benefit of all. If God really wants to stop this, He of course can.

The fact that the Biblical account says that the people already had had one language may be a truth which by itself indicates God's will that His creatures endeavor to restore such a state of pristine unity and friendship amidst all those He has created in His image. How otherwise can true friendships be formed among the world's people without a common language?

This Biblical account demonstrates the power of language, particularly when it is shared among many people--but it need not be seen as inevitably bad. Rather, we can surely conceive of the power being used for good (e.g., eliminating misunderstandings between peoples, etc.).

We have an opportunity to redeem ourselves in overcoming our petty squabbles and limited pride in our own linguistic groups, and if we do so in full humility, perhaps our endeavors will be so blessed by that same Creator.

Excerpts from Holy Scriptures Regarding Babel (where Languages are to Have Diverged)

Genesis 11:1-9 *New International Version (NIV)*

The Tower of Babel

1 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. 6 The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel -because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Possible Reference to Babel in the Qur'án

"They who were before them did plot of old. But God attacked their building at its foundation the roof fell on them from above; and, whence they looked not for it, punishment overtook them" (Qur'án 16:29, Rodwell's translation)

Integration/Diversity Objections

Some express concern that linguistic minorities do not learn the native language sufficiently while others insist that their rights are violated as their languages are denigrated, prohibited, or unrecognized (and worry that this may continue or even be exacerbated by a world language).

There is a great amount of truth to the concerns on both sides. We will attempt to address how the universal language would not need to compromise this, but would rather build upon both diversity as well as working toward integration and need for standardization.

Integration Objections

There is truth in the argument about a need for integration.

However, it is often only a misperception that minorities are not learning the language, since it takes time for incoming generations to learn it. Also, though it may be logical that people learn the language of the majority, we might consider how many individuals from our own language group go abroad (say for business) and live there without feeling any need to learn the language of that country's people (perhaps not only due to inconvenience, but even to arrogance). We could reflect on how we would feel if we, in our first days in a foreign country, went into say a bank for a transaction there and were chastised by that country's people because of our failure to speak the language (since resentment had been caused due to others of our language group living in that country without learning the language). We would probably want others to treat us as individuals rather than as a whole group.

We might also consider whether we ourselves would be able to find the time and energy to learn a new language, once we are past the prime age of language learning (and where most of our needs could be addressed readily by communicating with other speakers of our own language in a minority community).

If we live in some countries (e.g., the United States) there may even be no official language (and even if there was, this wouldn't regulate private behavior), so it is up to the individual which language they will speak (just as the European settlers to the United States decided to do in refusing to learn (at least on any large scale) the languages of its native inhabitants).

Moreover, since the world also has no official language as of yet, it is also particularly presumptuous for English-speakers to presume everyone should speak English wherever they go (especially in other sovereign countries).

However, again, just because we should be sensitive to diversity does not mean there is no truth to the idea that a common language is needed. We do need a common language, but given the interdependence and interconnectedness of the world--both for the moving of people (via transportation and immigration) and the moving of information (via communications), only an international language will suffice to address the issue--not vain attempts to close a country's borders and impose a national language on its people (which may even limit people's ability to learn the national language of the country, since the ability of a language learner to use their native language can help them acquire the target language).

Given the need for democratic principles and given our recognition of the international nature of the problem, we cannot really expect others to learn our language, nor is it practical for us to learn everyone else's languages. The only solution is that we urge our governments to an international agreement, and then if a language other than our native language is chosen, we must take the effort to ensure our children acquire this language, so that they will be able to freely travel domestically or abroad and communicate with anyone.

Diversity Concerns: Language not to be only Language or Required in all Domains

One thing people often do not hear when we refer to a universal language is that it is not to be the ONLY language. People will still be taught and still be free to use their native languages.

It will only be in certain domains that the international language will be used (e.g., international trade, international conferences, etc.).

In many domains people can speak or write in their native languages, and if another enters the conversation/dialogue whom they wish to speak with but who does not speak their native language, they will be able to switch to the international language (e.g., in an internet chat room).

Such a provision for the continued education of people in their native languages will allow people to transmit their wisdom and cultures to posterity and not cause unrest. It is true that almost nothing can be more threatening to people than taking away one of the most basic freedoms they have and a right most associated with assuring people's identity--the right to freely use one's own language (in most domains--obviously, asserting a "right" to use one's native language in say air traffic control would be meaningless and even disruptive and dangerous once an official language was chosen). This world auxiliary language should in no way seek to supplant that cherished right.

Concerns About Diversity in Representation

A globally and representatively determined choice (including participation of native peoples and peoples who span borders but may be underrepresented) would, unlike many national and regional language policies lend more credence to its acceptance by linguistic minorities, regardless of the choice, in that members of minority linguistic and cultural backgrounds would find their language and culture legitimized by representatives of their country of origin or ancestry having had a respected and autonomous say in the global language's determination (even if the final choice is not an invented language including words from their own language, their voice will be heard in the decision) as well as in their ability to keep their native language.

While various factors such as racism, colonialism, etc. have admittedly often achieved this by attempting and often succeeding in cruelly obliterating diversity rather than cherishing it, democratic processes, however imperfectly, have also increasingly entered the scene.

The lack of diversity-quashing imperialism (as well as lack of narrowly self-denying and other-rejecting provincialism) inherent in a world language (provided it is determined and/or designed in a fully representative fashion) should avert these past mistakes. The same might not be said for the market or sociopolitical forces currently determining lingua francas.

Even (or perhaps especially) die-hard nationalists may be attracted to the idea of the democratic choice of the language.

Of course, implementation would need to ensure native languages, as with successful national language assimilation policies, were not suppressed by such a global decision.

The least the naysayers can do, however, is to admit that playing a small part to lift a finger and pass on the idea to at least one other person is hardly a sacrifice to make toward establishing the utopia often dreamed of by poets and dreamers of past ages.

Concerns Ultimate Decision Process Would Be Unfair

Despite assurances that the participation would be diverse, some may still feel that the decision would ultimately be unfair.

Exactly how the delegates would be chosen (and how scholars as well as political representatives would be included in the process), how the body would be weighed, how native peoples and those spanning borders but with inadequate representation on the national level may be included, and even which institution would take on this noble enterprise (e.g., the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, etc.) are considerations which would still need to be debated and decided upon.

Ultimately, however, the decision by its very nature limits the ultimate choice to one language (though such a language could indeed be an invented one based on many languages). As in any democracy, the minority, however much its participation should be encouraged and even given some added preference by the majority to demonstrate the majority's eagerness for its inclusion, must submit to the will of the majority. As long as all nations of East and West are included, and attempts are made to listen to all minorities, the chosen language will indeed belong to the whole world, even if the choice is not unanimous.

What if an Existing Language like English is Chosen? What about Diversity then?

The choice is left up to the representatives of the world. Eventually, just as in any country, the majority decision must be abided by (after full consultation and encouragement of minority contributions). Again, each country's native language would be preserved by continuing education in that language, whatever the final decision for the world auxiliary language may be.

Any human language, if supported by the will of the peoples of the world, is, as testified to by virtually all modern linguists, flexible to adapt itself to the expressive needs of its users. (See subsection on language arbitrariness in the inevitable loss of diversity section.)

For those who advocate an invented language, despite its potential benefits of being easier to learn than existing languages and culturally neutral, the disadvantages of an existing language being more difficult to learn would be overcome as the language gradually was mastered and passed on from generation to generation and the disadvantages of being culturally aligned could be overcome by people coming to express their own cultural values through the world language, as any human language can allow. If the goal of such advocates is really international communication, they must be willing to accept that a choice of an existing language such as English if universally accepted, could fill our communication needs just as well as any other since again, thoughts can be expressed in any human language. (Of course, English and other existing language advocates would need to be willing to forego their own language as well given the potential benefits which would accrue to all.

Also, it should not be assumed that a globalized world will lead to a unidirectional change in culture (e.g., Western cultures influencing Eastern ones only).

Doesn't this Eliminate the Diversity of Language?/Won't this be Implemented in a Manner to Crush Diversity?

Language policy at an international level would certainly need sensitivity as to not only ensuring diverse participation in the choice of the world language (see diversity in participation section), but also in implementing whatever language is chosen amidst the various language groups (as sensitivity is currently needed in national (or regional) implementation of national languages. Although this implementation would be coordinated by an international institution (and may even be conceivably monitored in its implementation by such an international institution), it is ultimately of course national and local governments which would be responsible for implementing its instruction. Therefore, the concern of *national* languages being forcefully restricted of course need not be feared, but as with the present situation, local language groups would continue to need to be respected in their rights for using their own language in certain domains. It may be that a representative international body could even monitor that the rights of language minorities are being respected in not only the implementation of the world language, but also in any instruction in national languages.

Such a world language might even bring greater respect for diversity as minorities could communicate in the world language and not feel undue pressure to assimilate with the immediate national culture. Since the decision would be democratic and global (including native peoples), the language could be readily perceived as everyone's language, and not merely as belonging to one people (to which others were expected to adhere).

Similarly, the negative effects of generations emigrating to another country and the children swiftly abandoning their grandparents' native language (and thus family unity as well as cultural wisdom) might actually be averted as new prestige would be assigned to the world language to which all would likely (if an invented language) have more equal access (less stigma would be attached to immigrants in a country which already used a dominant pseudo-world language (e.g., English) as older immigrant children and adults might already have some exposure to the world language in their native countries).

Assuming linguistic rights are respected by the world community as they should be, the contributions which could be made by the diverse linguistic groups in not only preserving aspects of their cultures through the continued use of their own language but also through being able to convey and transmit, through a world language, aspects of their culture to the ever-changing cultures of the world, would be as welcome as the economic and scientific (as well as cultural) benefits they could themselves derive from the world pool of intellectual resources such a world language would offer. In the current situation, without a common language, all are unable to fully benefit from the collective intellectual and cultural resources of the planet.

Again, a common language would not lead to a homogenization of culture with influence coming only from one direction (e.g., only Western cultures influencing Eastern cultures).

What about a Possible Loss of Diversity Over Time as People May Feel Less Need to Use their Local or even National Language(s)?

Concern that Loss Would be too Rapid (for Future Generations' Access to the Language or for a Whole Language Becoming Extinct)

It often occurs, even if the language itself is not lost from the world or country, that a family will lose its knowledge of a language. This is inevitable as languages always change (e.g., we might ask how many English speakers today had their family pass on "Old English" to them and are able to read it now). However, it can indeed be a loss if the change is so rapid (e.g., if children feel pressured to learn English and abandon the "embarrassing" language of their grandparents) that not enough time is allowed for the older generations (who have not learned the national language where they are now living) to pass on their wisdom to their posterity. Since the decision for a world language would be democratic and involve all language groups, such a fact may help raise the prestige of all languages, such that such a rapid loss would not occur (since much loss of languages occur for social reasons such as having a stigma attached to a minority language).

There is also the issue of languages disappearing entirely. This is already occurring, some even with its last speakers willingly or even eagerly abandoning these languages. This fact, while it is inevitable and has occurred throughout history (as languages inevitably change), does call for caution in implementation such that the world language does not cause too precipitous a loss of local languages (if at all) since others may later wish to have access to the language for historical, linguistic, religious, or aesthetic purposes.

Allocating Resources to Ensure Any Loss is not too Rapid

As to concerns for the immediacy of access to ancient wisdom and history given an inevitable eventual reduction in number of speakers of a given language, the insistence that the choice for a world language be as a second language rather than a first language replacement should prevent this from occurring. However, even if certain languages were to eventually disappear (as is already occurring without such an official world language), the welcome impact of cultural diversity on the whole would be preserved as records of the old language (and cultures expressed by or embodied within the language) are preserved for posterity through its speakers/readers translating its oral or written works into the world language, adapting artistic themes of the old language into the new language, and making computer or textual representations of the language (e.g., dictionaries and grammars translated into the world language), etc.

Resources could also be allocated by the international community in order to make sure sufficient effort can be garnered to catalogue the features of already existing spoken dialects and written languages and translate its important works, if this cannot occur sufficiently on its own.

It is even possible that the language could be resurrected at a later date (if this cataloguing is sufficiently carried out).

Arbitrariness of Language (A Loss not Being Inherently Bad if Translation, Cataloguing of Features, etc. Can Occur)

Despite peoples' aggressive attachment to their own language, and despite the fact that cultural values are indeed encoded to some degree within the structure of a language, language itself is largely arbitrary. For example, there is nothing special about the word "apple" to say that another group of sounds could not represent the same object. The fact that many languages do just that proves this is the case. Therefore, it should not be so greatly terrifying that one's language may eventually be "lost."

If one fears that one's cultural identity will be destroyed with the eventual loss of one's language, as long as sufficient time is allowed for the transmission of one's culture (through translation, etc. (see section on "Concern that loss would be too rapid")), it should be kept in mind that its essential features will not be lost, since it is the human capacity for thought and processing of ideas which is universal and good ideas can be translated into any human language (including the world language which will allow one's culture to be made available for the whole world). Of course, it may take many words to do so, and artistic feeling may be lost, but again, even without deliberating switching languages, our own language would eventually change such that we could no longer comprehend it, just as our ancestors--from whatever language group we come--possessed languages which have since evolved to be no longer intelligible today.

In considering further the arbitrariness of language, we might further consider history. Although its changes came about only after great effort and time, the successive stages of our planet's people from unity of tribe to city-state and nation should prove such changes--even with the loss of local languages--are possible and desirable. Free trade of ideas, cultural expression, and economic and political activity, occur now within large linguistic groups which had priorly consisted of a greater diversity of languages (whether native or second languages) and this present unity of nations having a common national language accrues to the benefit of all (except in those cases where countries must deal with borders arbitrarily imposed upon them by foreign powers and hastily dividing groups which share a common language from each other). This has accelerated, moreover, due to higher levels of political, technological, and economic organization, and we are in a better position now to take advantage of this collective diversity and coordinate it through a common medium of communication. The benefit to the individual was not sacrificed by such advancements in the collective embrace.

Of course, if the decision for a world language does not sufficiently engage the support of the world's people brought about by a representative, global, and duly consulted, debated, and considered decision, the capacity for the world language to express any culture's thought (which any human language could do) would be a moot point, since the implementation of the world language will depend on the people's support.

(See also section on "Those who don't want any common language" for more arguments against diversity being used as an excuse for not having a common language.)

Objection to Any Greater Ability to Communicate with Others as WAL may Bring

Fears of Being Able to Communicate

For those who would be reluctant to give their posterity the shock of the new ideas to which they would have ready access from other countries and language speakers, it might be pointed out that such information will inevitably reach them, and might be considered as the necessary growing pains of the coming of age of humanity. Moreover, with a universal language would also come the possibility to influence what we perceive to be negative forces elsewhere, such that we might be able to persuade the possessors of such unhealthy ideas to change their own negative behaviors (as perhaps only such an encounter could make possible). We might also find that it is our own maladaptive ideas which we will come to change as a result of such an exchange.

Those Who Don't Want Any Common Language

We need not address the objections against a world auxiliary language by those few who with some hatred or prejudice do not wish to communicate with others.

However, there are some who argue the fanciful point that they like the idea of many languages existing eternally without a common one to taint the "purity" of the ideas. It may help for us to bring this idea closer to reality. How would we like it if we could only communicate with those in our city? Should we lament the fact that local languages may have been lost in the past when other languages united larger groups of people? Would we like for our friends to speak unintelligible different languages just for the sake of diversity? Or to take it a step further, could we not all invent our own personal language to use only with ourself or perhaps our immediate family and destroy our prior knowledge of other languages which are accessible to others (including our native language) in order to enhance our planet's linguistic diversity? Who could accept such ridiculous thinking?

Such an idea of separate languages being considered ideal without a common one has some similarities with the notion of "separate but equal". What is the benefit of this diversity if there is no coordination? Just hearing our brothers and sisters of the world as bird sounds is hardly a justification for it. It is when the cultures mix and their experiences are shared, that diversity becomes meaningful. Without a common language this is as best inefficient and probably impossible.

Since we operate on the realm of ideas would we be content to meet an alien race and not learn their ideas? If not, why should we be unwilling to become able to communicate on our own planet with other fellow human beings, such as a universal language would provide for posterity?

In order to benefit from specialization--of anything--a common standard of communication must exist. Would it be reasonable for someone to willingly choose for their body not to be able to respond to the same neural messages of one's brain because they wanted their own arms and legs to speak a different unintelligible language? Is it conceivable that anyone reading this letter would put the letter away and say that because his father in the past spoke a different language and didn't understand my language, that he should undo his understanding and corruption of learning this language and pretend not to understand it?

How can we thwart human nature to willfully regress in knowledge, especially if we believe and have faith that better solutions can be forthcoming out of human genius with greater understanding and opportunities for participation of our fellow interconnected human family? How could we continue to allow the systemic denial of ready opportunities for building mutual understanding and peace among suspicious peoples of different language groups? How could we say no to the opportunity to allow ourselves and others to make one more friend or even family member that we could not have otherwise?

How can we avoid allowing a fuller expression of the potentials of the human race--scientific, artistic, commercial, social, ethical/religious--with a common means of coordination and development by which all could benefit? Unless we take the ridiculous position that other language speakers have nothing to offer us or benefit from us (whether as individuals or as a language group) in their thinking, we must accept the concept of a universal auxiliary language and take some practical steps towards its realization.

Although many may cherish their ability to know many languages (particularly obscure ones which are not useful), it is the ability to use a language which is most important (except for linguists, perhaps, who generally speaking truly should know about different languages in order to approach it objectively). Impressing others with such abilities is not of use to humanity. Eliminating the need for so many, however, is.

Objections of Those not Seeing a Need (see also Benefits section)

Do we Even Need an International language in the Future (Technological Translators to Render this Unnecessary)?

Not only is translation inevitably imperfect and inconvenient (at least when compared to the universal access to which such global legislation could lead), but it is costly!

Such a mere technical solution only affords the economic and technical opportunity of access to a more global language (and indeed an imperfect opportunity) to those who already have such economic opportunities (and leaves behind those who do not).

Those insisting technology will itself solve the problem ought to not only consider the inconvenience and imperfection of being perpetually required to rely on such tools for translation, but also the cost to the poor who are inevitably left behind without such technologies. It is highly unlikely, even if such technology became inexpensive, that these tools for access would be handed out among all the poor of the world. A political solution would, on the other hand, bring access for all, and without the inconvenience and inaccuracy of machine translators.

Other Questions

Other questions may be answered in the **About Us** and **Taking Action** sections.