

**AN ATTEMPT TOWARDS  
AN INTERNATIONAL  
LANGUAGE**

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An Attempt Towards an International Language by Henry Phillips

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**HENRY PHILLIPS**

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LANGUAGE**



AN ATTEMPT

[TOWARDS

An International Language

BY

DR. ESPERANTO, *Secretary of*  
(WARSAW, RUSSIA) *L.M. Samarin*

TRANSLATED BY

HENRY PHILLIPS, JR

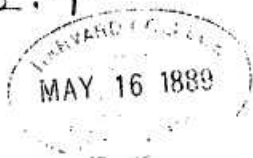
A Secretary of the American Philosophical Society

Together with an English-International Vocabulary compiled by the  
Translator

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1889

~~1231.11~~  
✓ 1231.32.4



*The Translator.*

"THE PLAN OF DR. SAMENHOF\* IS ESPECIALLY TO BE RECOMMENDED IN THIS RESPECT (THE FORMATION OF THE VOCABULARY), AND MAY BE OFFERED AS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF SOUND JUDGMENT. IT IS REMARKABLE AND PLEASANT TO SEE HOW EASY IT IS TO ACQUIRE."—*Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, Volume XXV, page 3.*

(\*Under the nom de plume of Dr. Esperanto.)

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## Preface by the Translator.

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At the request of the author I have prepared the following translation of his modest project for *An International Language*, which, in my opinion, goes further towards the solution of the problem than any of the other so-called "Universal Languages" as yet offered for public acceptance. I consider it to be the most simple, most natural and most easy of acquirement of all as yet presented; being based upon modern European tongues, its vocabulary is mainly already in the possession of every person of any pretensions to education. Its extreme simplicity of grammar and the ease with which new words can be created must especially recommend it to every class of readers. The time seems ripe for a combined effort towards the achievement of so glorious an ideal, and "we, as beings of intelligent consciousness \* \* \* should employ our faculties to direct the course of events." \*

HENRY PHILLIPS, JR.

PHILADELPHIA, September 17, 1888.

\* NOTE. Whilst not agreeing with the author in some of his views respecting grammatical formations, yet I have issued this work to show how easily a project of an International Language could be made effective.





## PART I.

It is likely that the eyes of the reader will light upon this pamphlet not without a certain amount of distrust, supposing, at first blush, that it treats of an Utopia utterly impossible of realization; for this reason, I would ask him, for the moment, to set aside any such preconceived idea, and to consider carefully, seriously and without prejudice, the matter of which I intend to treat in the present work.

I need not dilate upon the immense importance for Humanity of the existence of an International Language, one that could be adopted by all nations and be the common property of the whole world, without belonging in any way to any existing nationality. It is pitiful to consider the amount of time and labor continually given to the study of foreign languages, and yet, for all our pains, how often does it happen that, when we have crossed the boundaries of our fatherland, we can neither understand those among whom we are thrown, nor make them comprehend what we desire to communicate. How much time, trouble and money are wasted in the translation of the literary work of a nation, and yet how small a portion of its literature has ever been so reproduced or will be, even more or less unfaithfully. But, if there were in existence an International Language, all translations could be made into it, and even works written therein, which would possess, *ipso facto*, an international character. The impassable wall that separates literatures and peoples would at once crumble into the dust, and all that was written by another nation would be as acceptable as if in our own mother tongue; reading would prove common to all, and with it would advance education, ideals, convictions, tendencies—the whole world would be as one family.

Obliged to economize our leisure in order to pursue perforce the study of several languages, we are not in position to dedicate a sufficient amount of it to any one tongue, so that while on the one side it is rare to know perfectly even one's native language, so, on the other, no speech can be brought to perfection as it should be. This is the reason why we are so often obliged to appropriate, from foreign sources, words and phrases; if we do not, we run the risk of expressing ourselves inexactly, and even of thinking incorrectly; the relative poverty of each and every language must be taken into account, from which are often missing the richness and volume desired to be employed in one or another manner. The surest means of remedying this defect seems to me to be simply the possession of only *two* languages, which would allow an easy mastery, and at the same time each tongue could progress towards the highest perfecting and development. For speech has been the chief factor and motor in Civilization; by it men have been elevated above the level of the brute; the more a language is perfect, the more accessible is a nation to Progress. Indeed, the difference of languages is one of the most fruitful sources of the dissensions and differences among nations, for, of all things that impress a stranger in a foreign land, the language is at once the first and the greatest mark of distinction between him and them; not being able to understand or be understood, we naturally shun the contact of aliens. When we meet, instead of being able to draw instruction from the mutual interchange and comparison of opinions on political and social questions, matured after a long succession of ancestors in their modern homes, as soon as we open our mouths the first sound we utter shows that we are strangers, the one to the other. Any person who has had the fortune to reside in a town in which he meets citizens of nations often hostile to each other, can easily understand and appreciate the enormous service that could be rendered

by an International Language, one that, *without entering at all into the inner life of these peoples*, could, at least, be made serviceable for usual every-day affairs, in a land inhabited by diverse nationalities, where the official language differs from that of the race over which it bears sway. It seems useless for me to dilate on the vast importance an International Language would bear towards Commerce and Science. He who has pondered carefully upon this question, were it but for once in his whole life, must, of necessity, avow that there could be no sacrifice too great to make if we by so doing could acquire an Universal Language. So, for these reasons, every essay, every attempt in this direction, deserves, feeble though it be, our most serious attention.

The question I now submit to the public is the result of a *labor ripened by long years of thought*; and, in view of the very great importance of the subject, I trust that the reader will read my pamphlet attentively to the end.

I have no intention of analyzing all the attempts hitherto made towards the creation of an Universal Language, but shall content myself with calling the reader's attention to the fact that all these authors have striven to create a system of signs wherewith briefly to communicate thought in case of necessity, or have limited themselves to a natural simplification of grammar, or to exchanging words that now exist in living languages by others made up for the occasion, or taken by chance.

The attempts of the first kind were so complicated and so little practicable that they were still-born; those of the second class present some resemblance to a *language*, but possess no features that could give them the right to be called *International*; indeed, they seem to have received this name from their inventors from the simple reason that upon the whole habitable globe there exists no spot where even one person