

WORLD WIDE SPEECH

A much-discussed issue, International Language so far has proven a dud, but proponents are still hopeful of developing it as a weapon of peace.

Tomorrow's U.S. Bureau

About as fleeting and elusive as the dove of lasting peace is the international language issue, thus far a colossal fizzle.

But, despite its erratic, faltering start, international language backers claim it would be a first-class war preventive, a medicine to keep nations from flying at each other's throat at the drop of a hat.

Their argument: Wars are inevitable until people converse in a common tongue.

Its failure to materialize into something worthwhile is attributed to bad management: Its creators have stumbled into old pitfalls, such as complicated "basic" languages, thousands of tough words which can't be stomachached by the man-in-the-street, and a general lack of public interest.

Volapuk was the first "universal" language to appear (1879), and then Esperanto bobbed into being in 1887. Dr. L. L. Zamenhoff, Polish founder of Esperanto, gave it elements of Latin, Slavic, German and

1		23%	Chinese	6		4%	Japanese
2		13%	English	7		4%	African
3		12%	Hindustani	8		3%	German
4		7%	Russian	9		3%	French
5		5%	Spanish	10		26%	All Others

Chart gives breakdown of major languages. Chinese, spoken by 23 percent of world's population, heads list but its many dialects make many Chinese people "foreigners" to neighbors within their boundaries. An international language, proponents hold, would lead to better understanding—perhaps enabling would-be belligerents to settle differences with the tongue instead of the sword.

English. It received a heavy shower of publicity, caused a few minor rows among opposition members, then cooled off altogether.

Growled anti-Esperantos: It's a code, not a language. It's built mostly on basic German, which is far too complicated for the rest of the world.

A whole slew of world languages then flowed into existence (Mondolingue, Universal, Kosmos, Novilatid, Idiom Neutral, Ro. Spartari-Radio-Code, Idio. Occidental, Basic English, Phonetic Alphabet, Angelle, Global Alphabet), none of which stood the test and stuck.

During the past 60 years, numerous nations groups of nations and educators formed organizations to study and lick the thorny language problem. Most prominent is the International Auxiliary Language Association, the work of which met the approval of linguists and psychologists the world over.

Basic Elements Pooled

IALA's plan is to extract from all languages their common elements of vocabulary and grammar. This basic file of words (still in the laboratory stage) would serve to create an auxiliary language that could be understood with relative ease by everybody.

Another committee sprang up for the same purpose, comprising ministers of education from nine non-English-speaking Eu-

ropean countries. Rather than a combination of languages (as suggested by IALA), this committee offered English or French as the world language, with slight leanings toward English.

Reasons: English, they said, would play a major rôle in international intercourse and postwar collaboration; English also was understood and spoken by more people (some 270 millions) than any other single language.

Simplicity Is Keynote

The committee pointed out that though China boasts an astronomical 500-million population figure, the Chinese actually speak dozens of dialects, each a language in itself. With Russia, the same story: 156 of her millions speak Russian, with the rest of the provinces and republics speaking more than 40 different tongues.

Noting that simplicity was the password to a successful language, Cambridge's (England) C. K. Ogden spent the better part of 10 years in stripping the English language down to its basic structure. From an original 500,000 words, Ogden emerged with an astonishing low 1,200—of which 600 are nouns. A working knowledge of this basic English can be acquired in 60 hours, whereas ordinary courses in most modern languages demand two, three or more years of study.

Thus basic English may be the answer, and the eyes of educators are upon it.

They stipulate, however, that no language—despite its good or bad points—can be foisted on the rest of the world. It must be a matter of all nations studying and accepting a proposed language.

With an established international language, future wars may well be fought by diplomats with pens and paper—not by little guys with guns.