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IDO

Exhaustive Text Book of the
International Language
of the Delegation

and

Fundamentals of an
Artificial International Language

By

DR. MAX TALMEY

*Author of Practical and Theoretical Esperanto,
Defects of Esperanto, etc.*



IDO PRESS, NEW YORK

1919

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface: Essentials of the history of the international language in general; of Volapük and Esperanto; causes of their failure; origin, development, and definition of Ido; aim of this text book.....	1
Summary of the Ido Grammar.....	9
Comparative Texts of Esperanto and Ido.....	12
Principle of Translation.....	17
Prayer on the Acropolis, by Ernest Renan.....	17
PART I—ACCIDENCE	
Alphabet and Pronunciation—§§ 1-7.....	19
Parts of Speech	
Article—§§ 8-9	21
Substantives—§§ 10-11	22
Adjective—§§ 12-15	22
Pronoun—§§ 16-31	23
Adverb—§§ 32-34	28
Verb—§§ 35-40	28
Numeral—§§ 41-47	30
Preposition—§ 48	32
Conjunction—§§ 49-51	33
Interjection—§ 52	33
PART II—DERIVATION AND WORD FORMATION	
Introduction: Origin of the Ido vocabulary; principles of reversibility	34
Immediate Derivation—§§ 53-58.....	36
Mediate Derivation—§§ 59-68.....	40
Formation of Words by Composition—§§ 69-74.....	51
PART III—SYNTAX	
Order of the Parts of a Sentence: Normal order; logical position of the particle ne ; facultative accusative; inversion; interrogation—§§ 75-77	54
Punctuation: Period; comma; comma in rudimental clauses; other punctuation marks—§ 78.....	57

	Page
Article: With substantive; with adjective; with proper names—§§ 79-84	58
Substantive: Accusative; proper names; names of countries and peoples; title of honor; combining of nouns—§§ 85-92....	60
Adjective: Adjective as epithet; adjective used substantively; complement of an adjective—§§ 93-95.....	64
Pronoun: Personal; reflexive; etc.; distinction of <i>singla</i> and <i>omna</i> ; <i>ipsa</i> , <i>ipse</i> —§§ 96-103.....	65
Adverb; Original; derived; distinction of <i>plus</i> and <i>plu</i> ; of <i>kom</i> and <i>quale</i> ; adverbs as prepositions—§§ 104-111.....	69
Verb: Mixed verbs; invariably of the direct object; predicate consisting of two parts; infinitive after prepositions; participle replacing clause; passive voice for "false" reflexive verbs; reciprocity—§§ 112-124.....	75
Numeral: Time of the day; term per cent; decimal fractions; date; age; etc.—§§ 125-132.....	81
Preposition: Definitions; derived adverbs as prepositions; adverbs and adjectives derived from prepositions—§§ 133-136.....	83
Conjunction: Coordinate; subordinates; mode governed by; transformation of subordinate clause into infinitive phrase—§§ 137-140	91

PART IV—NOTES

Quantity and quality of a vowel; vowel as consonant; division of a word, notes 1-3.....	94
As good, as much, as possible, note 5.....	94
Pronoun <i>co</i> , <i>to</i> , <i>quo</i> ; <i>omno quo</i> ; <i>altru</i> , <i>irgu</i> ; etc., notes 6-8....	95
Fundamental principle of ambiguity and its consequences upon word derivation, note 12.....	96
Substantivizing of the adjective, note 14.....	96
Suffixes <i>-ier</i> , <i>-il</i> , notes 17-18.....	97
Suffix <i>-ig</i> with mixed verbs and with transitive verbs used intransitively, note 21.....	98
Suffix <i>-iz</i> , note 22.....	99
Intransitive verbs composed with prepositions treated transitively, note 25.....	100
Logic of the Ido system of derivation, note 27.....	100
Position of the negating particle <i>ne</i> , note 28.....	101
Order of the parts of a sentence; of the genitive, note 29.....	101
Review of the French method of using comma, note 30.....	102
Some punctuation marks, note 31.....	104

	Page
Formulas of politeness in letters; personal names; address, note 35	105
Preposition <i>de</i> with terms of quantity; <i>di</i> with <i>propra</i> ; <i>ego</i> ; <i>sua</i> , notes 36-39	106
Adverb <i>Jus</i> , note 40.....	106
<i>Ankore</i> , <i>Ja</i> , <i>ne plus</i> , note 42.....	107
So much the better; how much; together with; rather, notes 43-46	107
Transitive verbs without object; intransitive verb with direct object; invariability of the direct object, notes 47-50.....	108
Want of verbal character in verbal and participial nouns, notes 51-53	109
Reciprocity, note 54.....	110
Hours of the day; some numeral series; enunciation of large numbers; international measures of length, notes 55-58....	111
Preposition <i>ad</i> with verbs expressing motion; <i>de</i> ; <i>lor</i> , notes 59-61	111
Adverbs and adjectives <i>infre</i> , <i>infra</i> , <i>supre</i> , <i>supra</i> , etc., note 62..	112
Conjunctions <i>or</i> , <i>yen</i> , <i>ya</i> , notes 63-65.....	113

The citations from the magazine *Progreso* are designated by a Roman number indicating the volume of the magazine, followed by an Arabic number for the page in that volume, both in parentheses. A decision of the Ido academy is designated by dec.

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PREFACE.

TO enter upon the study of an international language in an intelligent manner some knowledge of the history of the attempts to create an international language is indispensable. A few of the most important historical data will therefore be briefly presented here. For a more thorough information reference is made to the excellent work on the subject by Dr. L. Couturat and Dr. L. Leau: *Histoire de la Langue Universelle*, a volume of nearly 600 pages treating historically and critically all artificial languages devised until about 1903.

The history of artificial international languages dates back nearly 300 years. During this period about 250 idioms have been constructed. They reveal a gradual evolution from crude linguistic devices, hardly deserving the name language, in the beginning, to more or less perfect languages in recent times, the later systems, as a rule, surpassing the earlier ones in quality.

From the beginning of this period to our times the problem of an artificial international language has occupied, to a greater or lesser degree, the minds of some of the greatest thinkers and scholars. Among them are to be mentioned Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Voltaire, Alex. v. Humboldt, J. v. Grimm, A. M. Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Ernest Naville, W. Förster, H. Schuchardt, W. Ostwald, Otto Jespersen, etc.

Of all artificial languages Volapük and Esperanto have gained the widest publicity. It is impossible to establish which of the two had the larger number of adherents, for the reports in this respect are entirely unreliable.

Volapük was devised by the German priest Schleyer of Konstanz, Baden, and published in 1880. It spread rapidly in all civilized countries and flourished until 1889. Then it

began to lose ground and declined as rapidly as it had risen and was soon forgotten. Intrinsic defects of the language, which became apparent at the congress of Volapükists in Paris in 1889, and failure of its advocates to come to an understanding as to the way to amend them furnished the causes for its downfall.

Esperanto was devised by the Russian physician Dr. L. Zamenhof of Warsaw while Volapük was still at its height and published in 1887. Its progress was very slow until the Frenchman Marquis L. de Beaufront, an eminent philologist, began to take interest in it about 1890. He became the second father of Esperanto by creating a real language out of the crude sketch of its inventor, and to him more than to anybody else is due the fact that Esperanto became known in every civilized country gaining everywhere great numbers of adherents many of whom still swear faithful allegiance to it.

Esperanto has attained a high degree of perfection and in many respects it excels all artificial languages preceding it and those which were devised as a result of the disintegration of Volapük. Because of its good features competent students of the problem of an international language praised and advocated it. They were well aware that it contained also substantial defects and pointed them out. But they recognized that these imperfections could be remedied and hoped that the necessary reforms would be introduced soon enough to prevent the language from deteriorating through its defects to such an extent as to be beyond correction.

The proper opportunity for starting the reforms of Esperanto came in 1907. In October of this year the Committee of the International Delegation for the Adoption of an International Auxiliary Language convened in Paris for the purpose which had brought the Delegation into existence at the Paris exposition in 1900. This purpose was to procure to the civilized nations an auxiliary international language either by indorsing one of the existing artificial languages or by constructing a new one if none of the existing ones were found adequate. The Committee composed of scholars of international reputation examined many arti-

ficial languages and rejected them all, including Esperanto in its original form. It adopted, however, Esperanto in principle under reserve of certain modifications to be introduced by the Permanent Commission of the Delegation in the sense defined by the report of the secretaries of the Committee and by the project of Ido which had also been presented for examination. Besides, the Committee recommended an understanding with the Linguistic Committee for Esperanto. When subsequently this understanding was sought, the majority of the Esperanto Committee, or at least that number of its members which was given out as its majority, refused absolutely to recognize the necessity of reforming Esperanto, and all negotiations in this respect had to be broken off. The Permanent Commission of the Delegation thereupon went its own way beginning a systematic further development and perfection of the project of Ido.

The Esperanto Committee also went its own way. But its failure to agree with the Permanent Commission of the Delegation caused Esperanto to lose ground everywhere. The deterioration of the language which had already commenced before continued now unchecked and is still continuing so that the language has become so overcharged with absurdities as to be entirely unfit for the rôle of an international language.

It is evident that the history of Volapük is repeating itself in Esperanto, though at a slower pace owing to the relative superiority of the latter over the former. The primary cause for the retrogression of Esperanto lies in substantial philological defects which have called forth sharp criticism from the most competent sources. The foremost of these linguistic defects is a faulty system of derivation or rather lack of a proper system of derivation. For while other imperfections, as peculiar letters not contained in any other language, cacophony, too much inflection, cannot render the language more imperfect than it was in its original form, faulty derivation increases the faults in leading to absurd word formations which by-and-by become an integral part of the language. This defect of Esperanto has

been most clearly expounded by Dr. L. Couturat in his lucid monograph: *Etude sur la Dérivation en Esperanto*.

These linguistic defects, however, could and would have been remedied but for the chief cause of Esperanto's decline. It consists in the most influential leaders of Esperanto having endeavored and succeeded to make Esperanto the medium of a sort of new religion called Esperantism or Homaranism and proclaiming that a common language of the nations in general and of Esperanto in particular would bring about universal brotherhood of men. As the medium of a religion Esperanto became inviolable, was not to be subjected to criticism, much less to change or reform. The fallacy of this new religion has been pointed out by the author (*Progreso*, I, p. 83). To still further strengthen the inviolability of the medium of the new religion the ridiculous assertion was put forward that Esperanto was the living language of a living people—*vivanta lingvo de vivanta popolo*. Here every argument had to stop, for a living language must indeed not be touched.

Entirely different was the policy of the Permanent Commission of the Delegation which undertook to develop the project of Ido. It founded in its behalf an official organ, *Progreso*, and an academy and invited criticism from all sides to be either published in this magazine or presented directly to the academy which was then to introduce the change in the language necessary to correct the imperfect feature criticised.

Ido is the pseudonym under which the foremost Esperantist Marquis L. de Beaufort presented to the Committee of the Delegation for examination several documents, a complete grammar, *Grammaire Complète*, an elementary grammar, and a short dictionary. They completely outlined a new language devoid of the defects of Esperanto while preserving its good features. It is actually this language that the Committee adopted after rejecting all others examined. But the decision to this effect was evidently drafted with the view to gain the adherence to the new language of the great number of those who favored original Esperanto. The decision reads: "Le Comité a décidé

d'adopter en principe l'Esperanto . . . sous la réserve de certaines modifications . . . à exécuter . . . dans le sens défini . . . par le projet de Ido." Esperanto, accordingly, was to be modified in conformity with this project, not inversely. Any other modern artificial language modified in this sense would have given the same result. Only a few more modifications would have been required. For the modern artificial languages resemble each other a good deal. The view, therefore, that the new language represents simplified Esperanto, has to be taken *cum grano salis*. At the present day after further deterioration of Esperanto on one side, and considerable further improvement of the new language through its academy on the other side, the difference between the two is very great, so that that view cannot at all be maintained any longer.

During the negotiations aiming at an understanding with the Esperanto Committee and for quite some time after they had been broken off, the new language was officially known under the name International Language of the Delegation. For about two years the name *Ilo*, constructed from the letters I and L of the term International Language, was favored by many and frequently used by writers. Several other names were proposed. But finally the pseudonym Ido of Mr. de Beaufort was adopted by the Committee of the Union of Idists (II, 288) and found general acceptance as the name of the new language.

Already from the beginning Ido was far superior to any artificial language ever devised. Through the painstaking strictly scientific work of the academy during the past seven years and through its liberal policy of inviting and considering every criticism, important changes and additions, notably in the vocabulary, have been made whereby Ido has attained a still higher degree of perfection. Recently the academy has decreed a period of stability of ten years during which no further changes are to be made. It may safely be stated that only very few will be required after the lapse of this period. The construction of Ido is thus completed and authors of text books are now enabled to offer to students work of lasting value.

