

**CLC-BRIEF OF  
“CLC AND REFLECTIONS ON THE LINGUISTIC BARRIER”**

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**Introduction**

After being invited to take part of the support team to the 13-th World Assembly of the Christian Life Communities, occurred in Itaici from 21 to 31 of July, 1998, and as an observer by profession (I'm a psychologist), I picked up in the air the uncomfot of the delegates, those very special people, when they tried to understand what one wanted to tell them, or when they intended a precise expression of their thoughts. After all, to what purpose to maintain barriers, when they can be undone? Here I wish to explain the reflections that came to me again, as well as to modestly offer a beginning of solution. The Principle and Foundation of this reflection includes a serious inner liberty (the Ignatian Indifference and Tantum quantum).

**1.THE PROBLEM**

**1.1 Extension**

I want to restric myself to the relationship of intimacy and deep communication, as well as to the change of informations and enduring formation, proper of our World CLC dynamics. It is enough to remember the triplicated work (there are three official languages) of communications of the Exco, as in the normal correspondence through the year and in PROGRESSIO, as in the half-year coordination meetings and, mostly, in the World Assemblies. It is insane the work of secretary, needing to triplicate all of the publications. It is exhausting the effort of the simultaneous translators, notwithstanding the inevitable imprecisions during the hurried translations, able even to completely alter the meaning of the authors and texts, of conferences and warnings. What for to complicate, when we can simplify? Beyond this, in an interpersonnal level, several unnecessary obstacles occurred. For instance, because of the present variety of languages, the nurse (member of CLC) several times needed to take along with her an interpreter in order to be able to look after the ill ones.

**1.2 Psychological causes**

Ignorance leads to suspicion. Suspicion leads to insecurity. Insecurity, to aggressiveness or, at least, to a prudent distance. The less mature the people, the more exposed to this somehow paranoic process, in a similar way as happens with individuals from their childhood. Immaturity is on the basis of the linguistic differentiation, to the extent of the affective farness. The evolutive process of individuals and societies motivate persons and peoples to pass beyond the closeness, proper of egocentrism, to a gradual opening toward the other, until it leads them to an attitude of solidarity with everybody and to the interest about the common and universal goodness. Nevertheless the languages stay many and keep being obstacles to the approach. How many precious books are constantly written. If the own author would publish his books in a common and easy to learn language, he would avoid the annoyance of bad and inaccurate translations. The so called “official languages”, chosen more by the economic power

than by their cultural prestige and diplomatic hability, reduced only a little the dimension of the problem<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. PATHWAYS TO SOLUTION**

2.1 – **A common language** of the above reflections seems to be the obvious conclusion for this proposition. It is not of any one the interest to substitute any of the existing languages. They are cultural patrimony of each nation and, by consequence, patrimony of mankind. However reasonable here and now will be to think of **an auxiliary language**, overnational (without privilege for any country), exempt of all kinds of prejudices, easy to learn and to speak, rich of thought expressing possibilities and able to express affective conditions as well as in any other language, which place all of its users on the same level.

**2.1.1 – Not Latin**: it was the official language in the epoch of Roman empire and during several centuries, until the high Middle Ages. Its expansion and permanence were due to a political domination, not to the free choice of the nations which adopted it.

**2.1.2 – Not any of the living languages**: First because each of them is more than tool for oral communication. It is above all the expression of a particular culture. In the second place, because no people willingly admit that its language do not be also among those official<sup>2</sup>. The student or user of another language, which is not his, does not perceive that he is lending to the native ones of that language a power of domination over his own culture and over his social, political and economic environnement.

**2.1.3 – A neutral language**: it is important that everyone stays in the same level, without any kind of privileges, including the linguistic ones. It is necessary to offer to all participants the platform of equality, as defends the Psychology of human relationship. On the same time, such neutral language should present clear advantages to be accepted. Mainly **easiness** to learn and **flexibility** in its handling to be able to a **clear expression** of any ideas and to **express emotions** when necessary. It should´nt have that tedious list of **exceptions to the rule**, one of the biggest stumbles to any user, including the native ones.

## **2.2 – That language exists**

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<sup>1</sup> Avoir trois langues (anglais, espagnol et français) dans l'Assemblée mondiale de CVX est-ce un avantage ou une limite? Disons d'abord que l'impression des documents était de 100 copies en anglais, 70 en espagnol et 45 en français, soit environ 46% pour l'anglais, 32% pour l'espagnol et 21% pour le français. La diversité des langues peut être perçue comme un obstacle. Tous les participants ne peuvent pas facilement communiquer entre eux, parce qu'ils ne parlent pas tous la même langue. Et de fait les regroupements et les échanges se font plus facilement par groupe linguistique. Peu à peu une seule langue (l'anglais) devient la langue commune de communication entre tous au niveau mondial. Cela facilite les échanges. A mon humble avis, il faut encourager le fait d'avoir une langue commune pour les échanges (Bernard Lesstienne, SJ, translator and interpreter during the Assembly).

<sup>2</sup> La différence entre l'ONU et l'Union Européenne (EU) est sur ce point éclairante. Tandis qu'à l'ONU il y a six langues officielles (Anglais, Français, Espagnol, Russe, Arabe et Chinois; en fait de plus en plus une seule que s'impose: l'Anglais) à Bruxelles il n'est pas concevable de n'avoir qu'une seule langue, ou deux ou trois, car l'EU veut être une fédération de nations (avec leur cultures respectives). Qui respecte chacune d'entre elles, et donc chaque langue des pays membres de l'EU est langue officielle de l'EU. Pour le moment cela représente 11 langues, et on pourrait d'ici 10 ans arriver à 20 langues. Ce sera trop; il faudrait trouver une solution; ce sera difficile car chaque pays, non sans raison, veut que sa langue soit respectée.

**2.2.1** – Many attempts have been made long ago of “artificial” languages, that is to say, languages with the characteristics of neutrality. Esperanto appears among all as the formula which more overcomes them by its simplicity of running and easiness of learning. Every one without a greater preparation is apt to come over it, at most in a semester. The vocabulary is extent, embracing all of the fields of life and of human knowledge. It is enough to quote among many other books, either translated or original in that language, the Bible, done by the own author of Esperanto. The ophthalmologist, Doctor Luiz Lazaro Zamenhof (1859-1917), suffered from his childhood the consequences of the linguistic Babel where he was involved. Expert in several languages, cultured and gifted with an exceptional intelligence, he dedicated long years to the research about the possible solution of the problem. **Grammar** is extremely simple and logic, the logic of the common sense, not precisely that of the academic Philosophy. Its 16 rules fit in a postcard. And, for general satisfaction, there are no exceptions to them. **The words of the vocabulary** were patiently chosen among the well known and more important languages, among Latin (in bigger proportion, 80%), Greek, Slavic, Anglo-Saxon and Oriental (Zamenhof was a great polyglot). **The Pronounce and Orthography** are absolutely phonetic, that is to say, the words and letters are pronounced exactly as they are written. Esperanto is not a dream yet to be accomplished, it is a worldwide reality. and was acknowledged by UNESCO as an auxiliary language, though not officially adopted, but recommended.

#### **2.2.2 – The Church position before Esperanto**

The Preface in Latin of Pope’s John XXIII Encyclic “Pacem in terris” with ecclesiastic approval is enough enlightening of the Catholic Church attitude concerning the use of that auxiliary language in the religious spheres. In its version in English is said: *As the truly universal language, so called Esperanto, wants to bring peace and join all nations of the earth, hundreds of thousands people, who speak it everywhere, intently wish to know this letter...Pope Pius Xth, foresaw this on 1906, when he blessed the pioneers of the Catholic Movement in favour of Esperanto and said: I consider this language very useful to keep the union of the faithful christians of the whole world.*

Among the pioneers of Esperanto there already were active catholics, priests and lay people, who wished to use the international language for the purpose of apostleship. Fr. Émile Peltier organized the catholic movement, endowing it with the catholic magazine “Espero Katolika”, the most antique of the esperantist magazines existing so far, under the motto “One only flock and one only Shepherd”. Pius XIIth, still Cardinal Pacelli, said: *“I augur to Esperanto, in the futur of civilization, a role like that of Latin in the Middle Ages.* Pope John Paul II was also an esperantist.

#### **2.2.4 – Possibilities for the World CLC**

The expenditure of money and time to move the organization of the World Community is clear and evident. The coordination of that machine with global proportions can be relieved by streamlining communication channels. Is it a utopia? Chimera certainly it is not, because Esperanto is already a reality. My hope, by putting on paper these considerations, has from the beginning been **"In all love and serve"**, trying to facilitate the global community a great way, for me clear, of hope towards a more ready harmonization link between its members worldwide, in such a way that can be said about us: **"See how they love each other!"**