

INTERLINGUA

S. B. SACHS, M.A., M.D., *Henley-on-Klip, Transvaal*

It is essential for us in the Republic of South Africa, with our advanced technology and progress in the medical sciences, to communicate our observations and discoveries to those countries in Africa and elsewhere whose problems are similar to ours.

The language barrier is a considerable hindrance to the free communication of scientific thought. In a recent survey made under the auspices of UNESCO, it was estimated that only about one half of the world's scientists are at present able to read English. In the French, Portuguese and Belgian territories understanding of English is limited and a knowledge of Afrikaans must be minimal, with the result that important publications cannot be understood.

With the introduction of Interlingua during the last decade, an effective medium of language communication has broken down the existing barriers. With a scanty knowledge of Latin or any European language, Interlingua can be understood with very little effort. The following extract in Interlingua illustrates the extreme ease of comprehension without any specialized learning.

'Excellente instrumentos de production e moderne methodes de transporto ha reduceite le efforte human . . . Vero, on potera imaginar que un era de felicitate universal approcha rapidmente pro nos humanos.'

The History and Development of Interlingua

Peano in Italy in 1908 published a work called *Latino sine Flexione*. This was the precursor of Interlingua. After the first World War the International Language Association was formed among leading world philologists who studied the problems involved in language communication for nearly 2 decades. The final formulation of Interlingua evolved from this work, and it was largely as a result of the efforts of Clark E. Stillman and Alexander Gode that Interlingua has developed during this last decade. In 1953 the International Language Association was dissolved and Interlingua was made a division of the Science Service Organization in New York with Alexander Gode as its chief.

The Structure of Interlingua

Interlingua has been described as a streamlined version of one's own language. It is not a language which has been created artificially; rather, it has grown from the

common denominators of all Western languages. Even a cursory examination of words will reveal a common word bank which all Western nations have drawn upon and added to. The basic capital has been classical Latin followed by French terms which had been derived from Vulgar Latin in the middle ages. It has been estimated that 45% of English words have come from this source. In modern times, commonly used technical words have Greek roots, e.g. electricity, telegraph, dynamo, xylophone, etc. Other words, often of American origin, have worldwide usage, e.g. talkie, movie, croon, robot, hiking, etc.

The grammar of Interlingua is Romance. The verbs have no personal endings, but tenses are distinguished by verbal endings. There are no declensions of nouns, and the definitive article is invariable as in English. Use is made of a considerable number of particles and Latin prefixes such as *ultra*, *pro*, *semper*, *ex*, etc.

Progress of Interlingua

The following is an extract from a personal communication written by Dr. Alexander Gode in Interlingua. 'Currentemente interlingua demonstra su capacitate de funger como lingua ponte super toto in le litteratura periodic del medicina. Plus que vinti periodicos medical, incluse le Jornales del Association Medical American, del Association Medical de Denmark, e del Association Medical del State de New York, publica routinarmente summarios in interlingua con omne lo reportos primari de interesse clinic e laboratorial . . . Si circa 55 inter 100 medicos in omne partes del mundo pote leger un texto in anglese, le remante 45 pote leger le appendite summario in interlingua . . . In plus, le utilisation universal de Interlingua como lingua pro summarios renderea universalmente accessibile le substantia essential de un message redigite in norvegiano, finno, afrikaans, o non importa qual (which) lingua currentemente considerate como "minor".'

Medical and scientific workers should have no difficulty in understanding this extract. As a first step it would be an advantage to translate summaries of medical articles into Interlingua. At a later stage as more people become conversant with this language it can be used with great benefit in international congresses.