Neutrality of International Languages[*]

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the neutrality of international languages. First, a derivation of the concept of "neutral language" from "international communicative act" is provided; it is argued that an acceptable neutral language for international communication can only be an artificial language. Certain characterizations of consciously created languages are discussed. The paper distinguishes two types of neutrality: communicative neutrality and linguistic neutrality. All planned languages are communicatively neutral, but their linguistic neutrality varies, reflecting the diversity of language design principles. Given that absolute linguistic neutrality unattainable, it becomes reasonable to construct a language based on certain control languages plus linguistic universals. We introduce the term "deneutralization" to designate a process whereby a neutral language changes into an ordinary language. The paper also shows that Esperanto has not become deneutralized.

Keywords: international language, neutrality, deneutralization, artificial language, planned language, universal language, Esperanto

1. Introduction

Today English is already a global language (Crystal 1997), but many people still consider that it is not an ideal solution for international communication. Wright (2000: 246-247) mentions one reason for this in her book on the role of language in nation-state building and European integration: "They [artificial languages] are ideally suited to the role [of lingua franca] since they are not the languages of European nations of states. No section of the EU would reject Esperanto in the way that it would reject English. None of the objections would apply". Gobbo (2005) also maintains that an International Auxiliary Language (IAL) would be likely to serve as a common language in the European Union more effectively than English and other natural languages. If we designate this property of artificial languages which Wright and Gobbo value highly—as the *neutrality* of a language, it is appropriate to suggest that an ideal means of international communication should be more *neutral* than ethnic languages. But does any such thing as a neutral language exist? Or are we to accept the claim of Van Parijs (2003) that "there is no neutral language, no language equidistant from all others"? How can we characterize more carefully the neutrality of a language in international communication? In this paper, we will try to provide an explicit characterization of the neutrality of a language in the context of international communication. In the second section, we discuss the general concepts of international language, universal language, artificial language, planned language. The third section focused on the notion of the neutrality of a language. The linguistic neutrality of an international language is the topic of the fourth section. The question of whether an artificial language would deneutralize once the number of its native speakers increases is, discussed in section 5.

2. International Language and Artificial Language

Ammon (1994) provides a definition of international language (henceforth IL): "a language *used* for international communication." By definition, international communication occurs between nations, or rather, individuals belonging to different nations. A communicative act may be called international only if it occurs between different countries, i.e., between inhabitants or citizens of different countries, or between different nationalities, i.e.,—roughly speaking—between (native) speakers of different languages.

In this definition, we see no formal conditions structurally constraining the class of ILs. In other words, any language can play the role of an IL and be called an IL if it is used in an international communicative act. The following figure makes explicit some points about the roles a language can play in international communication (Liu 2001a: 151):
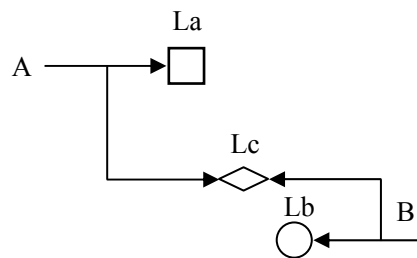
La, Lb and Lc are three (different) languages. La and Lb are the mother tongues of communicative partners A and B respectively. It is evident that A and B are communicatively equal in the interaction only if Lc is not the same as either La or Lb. Accordingly, we can call Lc a *neutral* language for A and B, because it is neither A's nor B's mother tongue.

If we enlarge the set of communicators to include all the people of the world, it is not possible to find a natural language that can

serve as the neutral Lc. In international communication, if any national language plays the IL role, the privileges of the native speakers of the IL are immediately evident: (1) The native speakers of the IL are not forced to study any foreign languages in order to communicate internationally, but can spend their precious time on other, perhaps more rewarding endeavors. (2) They are, as a rule, linguistically superior in the IL to non-native speakers of IL, i.e., they can express their ideas more precisely, more grammatically, more elegantly, and more fluently. That the native speaker's person's privilege is the non-native speaker's disprivilege felt quite acutely by many communicators (Ammon 1994: 1729).

In a study on foreign language learning of European Union, Grin (2005: 7) arrives at the following conclusions: (1) the United Kingdom, in the EU context, gains at least 10 billion Euros per year because of current predominance of English; (2) if one takes account of the multiplier effect of certain components of this sum, which the Anglophone countries can, because of the privileged position of their language, invest elsewhere, this total becomes 17 to 18 billion Euros per year; (3) this estimate does not take into account certain symbolic system effects (such as the leverage that the native speakers of a hegemonic language have in any situation of negotiation or conflict in that language); it is clear that these effects also have tangible economic consequences.

One response to this problem has been a series of efforts to create a language specifically designed as a neutral medium for international communication. Initiators of such projects designate their object of construction variously as an international language, an auxiliary language, an artificial language, a universal language, a world language, or a planned language.

Thus, the term IL is used in two senses: (1) the common-sense understanding is that a language that people from different backgrounds or nations use with each other—IL as a *function*; (2) the literature also conceptualizes ILs as *entities*, using the term *ILs*

to refer to artificial or planned languages, languages that were created specifically in order to facilitate international links and understanding, sometimes termed international auxiliary languages (Phillipson 1999: 24-25).

At the beginning of his monograph on artificial languages, Large (1985) writes, "Since the early seventeenth century, several hundred artificial language schemes have been constructed in the hope that a universal medium for international communication can be adopted. Unlike any natural language, which already possesses a group of native speakers, an artificial language would represent, it is argued, a neutral tongue acceptable to all [...] In some cases these language schemes have been intended to act as a universal language in place of all existing languages: one language for the world. More usually, however, the language constructors have shouldered less ambitious aims: to create an international auxiliary language which would function for international communication alongside its parochial natural cousins."

This paragraph gives two basic features of such a construct: (a) a universal medium for international communication; (b) neutral and therefore acceptable to all. According to Large, artificial languages can be classified into two subsets: universal languages and international auxiliary languages. In my usage and that of other scholars working on artificial languages, however, these two terms are synonyms. Our usage goes back to the first classic compendium-level study of artificial languages (Couturat & Leau 1903, 1979), whose authors explain that they use the expression "langue universelle" (universal language) as a synonym of "langue internationale auxiliaire" (international auxiliary language), because (1) a "universal language" is not conceptually coterminous with the notion of a (future) unique language of humankind; (2) modern authors of "universal languages" do not expect their languages suppress or supplant national languages.

The expression *universal language* was used primarily in the

seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, but in our era, the term "universal language" can also be found in the titles of works on international language or in the names of projects. A simple word count of the relevant occurrences in Duličenko (1990) shows that the names of more than 70 artificial language projects contain the word "universal" or its translation equivalents. Several major scholars in interlinguistics use the term "universal language" in the titles of their works (Knowlson 1975; Couturat & Leau 1903, 1979; Slaughter 1982; Strasser 1988). Today, we should also add the name of *Journal of Universal Language* to this list.

According to Duličenko (1989: 54), a typical universal language (lingua universalis, langue universelle, vseobščij jazyk, and so on) was designed for use by all people on Earth and forever (i.e., as the foremost or unique human language of the future). Projects of this kind were actively worked out from the 17th century (the first project bearing the name of "universal language" appears in 1650) until the middle of the 19th century. In the second half of the 19th century, the popularity of "universal language" projects declined, and in the 20th century they occur only sporadically.

Eco proposes a distinction between a *perfect language* and a *universal language*. He distinguishes between the search for a language capable of mirroring the true nature of objects—a *perfect language*—and the search for the language which everyone might, or ought to, speak—a *universal language* (1995: 73). It seems to me that Eco's *perfect language* corresponds to my understanding of *universal language,* while his *universal language* is the familiar notion of an auxiliary language for international communication.

Therefore, the term "universal language" has two basic meanings: (1) the only language of a future united humankind, described occasionally in utopian social models in the Renaissance and in more recent works of utopian socialism or modern interlinguistics; (2) a consciously created language for international communications. Blanke (1997: 5) sees a mismatch between the second meaning and

the term "universal", which he thinks gives the erroneous impression that the purpose of such a language is to push aside and replace national languages. This is indeed a possible misunderstanding. Some of my students ask me if the aim of *shijieyu* (the Chinese name for Esperanto) is to replace the national language. More generally, the term *universal language* tends to give rise to negative ideas about the function of such a language.

If the term *universal language* is not a suitable name, why is it in use? Künzli (2006) explains the preference for the term "neutral universal language" (neutrale Universalsprachen) over "international planned languages" (internationale Plansprachen). He believes that the former is easier for layman to understand and also less misleading than the latter, which often also include other systems under the term *planned language*.[1] In principle, then, the two terms are the same. Another factor is the fact that some constructors call their system 'universal' because the system is based on linguistic universals.

Blanke (1989: 63) analyzes the various designations for the artificial languages and recommends the term "planned languages", defined as "language systems which have been consciously created according to definite criteria of an individual or group of individuals for the purpose of making international communication easier".

The definitions given above can be schematically represented as follows:

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[1] For example, programming languages for computer, and interlanguages for contrastive linguistics.
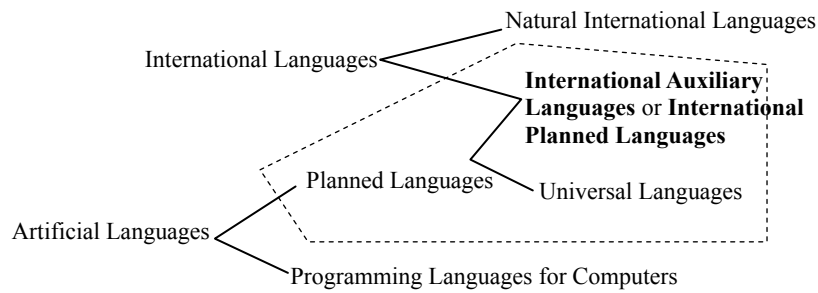
In the following sections, in accordance with what Blanke recommends, we use the term "planned language" to designate a language consciously created for international communication, and we regard this term as synonymous to "international auxiliary language" and "international planned language". These terms are used in the titles of two important works Blanke (1985) and Duličenko (1990).

3. The Neutrality of an International Language

From the discussion above, it is clear that any language can play a role of neutral international language, but a natural language playing the IL role is limited to regional functioning: it cannot serve as a global neutral language. A global neutral language can only be a planned language, for only such a language is neither the mother tongue of any ethnicity nor the national language of any nation or state. If this plausible line of reasoning does indeed hold, why does Van Parijs (2003) say, "There is no neutral language"? To clarify this remark, he explains that Esperanto, for example, belongs unambiguously to the Western group of Indo-European languages, with identifiable Romance and Germanic ingredients. On that matter, he has a point. At least lexically speaking, Esperanto is a Romance language. Gledhill (2000) analyzes the language sources of the most

often used 100 and 1,000 words in Esperanto. His findings are as follows ("Esperanto" is his term for words formed by internal combinatorial devices peculiar to Esperanto itself, and "Indo-European" is to be construed as meaning "other Indo-European".):

Romance	Esperanto	German	Indo-European	Greek	Balto-Slavic
70%	12%	10%	5%	<2%	<1%

If the planned language can be linguistically shown to belong to a historically specifiable family of natural language, it would not be neutral for learners from other languages families. This line of reasoning underwrites the statement by Van Parijs (2003) that "when proposed on a world scale, or even within Europe with Finnish, Estonian, Hungarian, Basque and Maltese as part of the picture, it [Esperanto] cannot make any claim to neutrality."

It is clear that what Van Parijs means by neutrality is quite different from the notion of neutrality elaborated in section 2.

In order to articulate the neutrality notion further, beyond these preliminaries, it is useful to review the definitions of neutrality provided by other interlinguists.

Kuznecov (1991: 206) defines neutrality as "the distinguishing feature of an artificial language with respect to the natural (national) languages, to be understood as independence from political, economic and other interests of this or that nation. Dead ethnic languages also have such neutrality—for example, Latin, when used as an international language. Neutrality can also be interpreted as an intrinsic property of an artificial language, if its structure has been designed so as to explicit not resemble the structure of any of the source languages."

Szilágyi (1931: 76) defines the neutrality-balance of the international language as "a feature of the international language.

The principle of neutrality-balance requires that the international language be equidistant from all national languages. If these languages appear as constituents within an international language, then they should be evenly distributed."

Schubert (2004: 328) introduces a new concept of "intercultural language". Every language has an inherent "interculturality", he argues, which determines the potential of that language as a means for intercultural communication. We may regard this interculturality as a notion closely related to that of the neutrality of language. The following figure is adapted from Schubert.
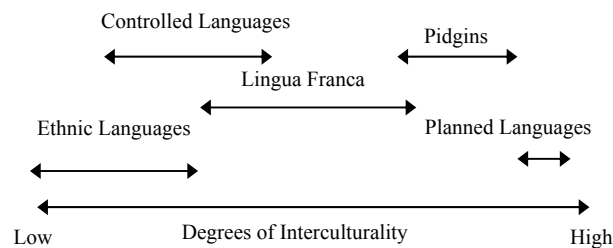
The figure displays clearly the advantage of a planned language as a neutral medium of intercultural communication. It is also worth remarking that Pidgins also have a high interculturality (or neutrality) compared with ethnic languages.

On the basis of this survey of the positions articulated in the literature, it seems reasonable to distinguish two major aspects of neutrality[2]: (1) communicative neutrality, or the requirement that the international language should not be the mother tongue of any participant in the communicative act; (2) linguistic neutrality, or the requirement that the international language should be linguistically equidistant from the participant's mother tongues, and thus from all

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[2] These two aspects are similar with the classification of Detlev Blanke (2006, personal communication): political neutrality and linguistic neutrality.

languages of the world. While the planned language seems an adequate solution to the problem of communicative neutrality, the linguistic neutrality of a planned language is not a problem that is easy to address.

Bastardas i Boada (2002) too drawn a similar conclusion: "Clearly, if a neutral code that is not the L1 of any group was adopted, people would be less likely to see a code of intercommunication as an L1, thus guaranteeing further the level of conservation of historical linguistic diversity. This would also make humans more equal in terms of their initial language competencies, since everybody would have to learn the language. However, here we may face problems such as the linguistic distance between the languages of each group and the structure of the language of intercommunication that is finally adopted. How can we create a neutral code that will be equal for everybody?"

4. The Linguistic Neutrality of a Universal Language

According to the traditional classification by Couturat & Leau (1903, 1979), which is based on the relationship of planned languages to ethnic languages, planned languages can be categorized as a-priori or a-posteriori or mixed systems. An a-priori language is composed entirely of invented elements not found in any natural language, and is usually based on a logical classification of ideas. In practice, this tends to make the language more difficult to learn and use. An a-posteriori language is based on elements of grammar, vocabulary, and syntax drawn from one or more natural languages. This more pragmatic approach is usually motivated by a desire to design a workable auxiliary language, which can be easily learned and used by everyone. A mixed system includes both elements. This classification is evidently related to the lexical material of planned

languages. In other words, we can place any system of planned language on an axis ranging from artificiality to naturalness. In fact, we can even apply these criteria to natural languages as well. This involves highlighting the fact that natural languages have unnatural (artificial) elements just as planned (artificial) languages have natural elements. Schubert (1989) constructs a continuum of decreasing artificiality that ranks the following types of languages:

- An a-priori planned language (e.g., Leibniz's language of 1666)
- An autonomous a-posteriori language (Esperanto)
- A naturalistic a-posteriori language (Occidental)
- A compromise language for a certain family of ethnic languages (pan-Slavic)
- A modified or simplified ethnic language (Latine sine flexione)
- A simplified ethnic language for the purpose of introducing learners to the unmodified language (Basic English)
- A more or less consciously developed literary language linking several language communities (medieval Franco-Italian)
- A highly planned ethnic language (Estonian)
- A super-regional standard form of an ethnic language (High German)
- An ethnic language "restored" by purists (Icelandic)
- An "untouched" ethnic language (Frisian)

This viewpoint is not only accepted by interlinguists; we even find a similar language spectrum from an article about computer languages (Baron 1994: 663):

NATURE
- Animal signaling systems
- Natural human languages
- Sublanguages
- Universal languages based on natural languages

    - Logically constructed universal languages
    - Computer languages
    - Notation schemes
  ARTIFACT

    If a planned language is preferred merely for reasons of "neutrality", then it seems obvious that the choice should fall on an a-priori language, having no connection with any known tongue, but rather serving as a brand-new vehicle of human thought (Pei 1958: 174). But the central function of an international auxiliary language is to serve as the medium of international communication. In our quest for a perfect and completely neutral language, we ought not to ignore the history and practice of planned languages.

    Blanke (1985) establishes 18 stages of planned language development from a project to a language, on the basis of practical usage.[3] We emphasize the importance of the sociolinguistic classification of Blanke to show that social factors are truly influential or decisive in the development of planned languages. The serious study of planned languages cannot afford to ignore the social factors. According to the practical criteria of Blanke, we can classify approximately 1,000 planned language systems into three classes: PL (planned language) projects, semi-PLs, and PLs. Almost all the systems belong to the project category. The exceptions include a few systems that reached stages 15-16, even 19 (of the 28 stages). They are Volapük (Schleyer 1879), Latino sine flexione (Peano 1903), Ido (Couturat 1907), Occidental (Edgar de Wahl 1922), Basic English (Ogden 1930), and Interlingua (IALA/Gode 1951)[4]; these count as semi-PLs. The exception among these exceptions, Esperanto (Zamenhof 1887) has to some extent crossed all 28 thresholds and

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[3] He later breaks the process down into 28 stages (Blanke 2001).
[4] The parenthesized indications are not to be construed as bibliographic references; what we show is the name of the author and the year of inception of the project.

become the only PL. All the semi-PLs Blanke considers are based on natural languages and can be classified as a-posteriori or mixed systems. The history of planned languages shows that the task of interlinguists is to find a balancing point between a-priori and a-posteriori.

Among the principles for constructing planned languages, the first principle is "Base any arbitrary properties in the planned language on the corresponding properties in the languages of the target population. Aim to represent all subgroups equally in this respect." But, just said by the author "if we accept the premise that languages of the target population should in some ways influence the properties of the language that is to be used as a vehicle of communication between them, then it is clear that no one language can be the ideal planned language for all of these different populations, since different target populations will have languages with different linguistic properties, and these should be reflected in the corresponding target languages" (Maxwell 1989: 103-104).

In 1908 Otto Jespersen, in his preface to the Ido-German dictionary by Louis de Beaufront, formulated, in Ido, an important facility maximization principle for interlinguistics: 'that international language is best which in every point offers the greatest facility to the greatest number' (la maxim bona internaciona linguo helpanta esas ta, qua en omna punti ofras la maxim granda facileso a la maxim granda nombro de homi). In his book "An International Language", he enlarged upon that principle by saying that it does not mean that we should take Chinese as our interlanguage, simply on the basis of the fact that it is known to the greatest number of men. In other words, the principle does not apply, as he made clear on several occasions, to an absolute number of individuals, but only to the number of those individuals who require communication with other nations.

Jespersen (1928) also argues "It is, however, very important to remember that the facility of which we speak here is not merely the

superficial facility, with which a printed message can be understood at first sight—that is something, but not everything. For an interlanguage to be really useful it must be easy not only to the reader, but also to the intending writer and speaker, and this implies a good deal more". Yes, facility maximization, rigorously understood, is a very important principle, which tells us that the selection of lexical material is only one aspect of making a language easy to learn; a language designer also needs to consider the other components of a language. Linguistic neutrality cannot involve only lexical neutrality, but must also include other aspects of linguistic structure.

Jespersen maintains that the creators of an international language need only consider the languages of those people who require international communication. Janton (1988: 1681) revisits this point: "An IL (international language) is not only an interethnical or even international language since it can be non-territorial and non-ethnic. In order to define the internationality of a language, both the quantity and the quality of communication realized in this language must be taken into consideration. That is why it is more important for the expansion of a language to conquer a sphere of activity than a large population with a small amount of communication." So understood, neutrality seems to amount to no more than the internationality of the lexicon of a language. It is from this viewpoint that Ido has been projected as having a more international appearance to it than Esperanto. Here is a more precise analysis of the Ido lexicon by Couturat: 91 % of the words match French, 83 % match Italian, 79 % match Spanish, 61 % match German, 52 % match Russian. These estimates, cited in Jacob (1947: 93), do not add up to 100, since the same Ido word can find several matches. It is obvious that Ido is distinctly more Romance (or Latinate) in its vocabulary than Esperanto. This can look like an advantage only because, in the eyes of many creators of planned languages, a Latinate visage may suffice for "international" branding.

Barandovská-Frank (1995: 97-101) provides a list of Latin-based or Latinate planned language systems; her list includes 179 projects until 1993.

Critical readers are of course bound to ask: if creators of planned languages are aiming at international application, why do they prefer a Romance lexicon? Why can't we make a more international lexicon on the basis of a mathematical and statistical calculation? Concerning the last point, Janton (1993: 137-138) has a good explanation: "It would be naive to suppose that internationality consists primarily in the greatest diversity of lexical sources. A language comprised of words from all languages would be statistically but not linguistically international. The proportion of each language in the whole would be so small that the sum of such contributions would seem foreign to everyone. It has been calculated that we can understand 80 percent of a language by means of only two thousand words. If we were to choose, say, one hundred languages (thereby eliminating 96 percent of the spoken languages of the world), the share of any one would be twenty words. What would be the advantage of that?"

The idea of a statistically equitable neutral IL has in fact been implemented; we need not take Janton's speculations at face value. Brown (1960) tries mathematically to construct the words of his system "Loglan". His paper offers the following account of how the word-shapes were arrived at. According to his calculation, over two thirds of the world's present inhabitants speak one or more of exactly eight of its several hundred natural languages with either native or second language proficiency. Counting, for each language, both its native speakers and those of its proficient non-native speakers who are not native speakers of any of the other seven, these eight languages, in the approximate descending order of the number of their proficient speakers, are: English, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Russian, Spanish, Japanese, French and German. Now if one regards the 1700 million speakers of the eight major languages as the target

population of Loglan research, the relative statistical importance of each of them may be defined as the proportion of their speakers in the whole. On that basis the relative importance of English is approximately 0.28; Chinese 0.25; Hindi 0.11; Russian 0.10; and so on down through German, with 0.05. If these figures are even approximately correct, English and Chinese are overwhelmingly the most "important" modern languages; their speakers constitute 53 per cent of the target population. We turn now to Brown's methodology for word shape choice. The following is an example of choosing a shape for word for "blue", which comes out as "BLANU" in Loglan:

BLANU	ALL OF ENGLISH BLUE [**BLU**]	1 X 0.28 =0.28
BLANU	ALL OF CHINESE **LAN**	1 X 0.25=0.25
BLANU	1/2 OF HINDI NI**LA**	0.5 X 0.11=0.06
BLANU	2/7 OF RUSSIAN GA**LU**BOI	0.3 X 0.10=0.03
BLANU	1/2 OF SPANISH AZUL [**ASUL**]	0.5 X 0.09=0.05
BLANU	NO COUNTABLE PORTION OF JAPANESE AO OR KON	0 X 0.06=0.00
BLANU	2/3 OF FRENCH BLEU [**BLÖ**]	0.7 X 0.06=0.04
BLANU	ALL OF GERMAN **BLAU**	1 X 0.05=0.05
TOTAL LEARNABILITY SCORE		=0.76

Only the phonemes common to and occurring in the same order in both the Loglan and the natural language word are counted towards determining the learnability score. The total learnability score expresses the probability that a person will learn the word from association with a familiar word in his base language.

The process is mathematically precise and scientific, but the outcome is less acceptable than Brown might expect. As a native speaker of Chinese it is not an easy task for me to recognize BLANU as Chinese LAN. For a native speaker of Hindi, the fact

that the phonemes LA appear in the Hindi word for 'blue', NILA is less salient than the fact that the same phonemes LA appear in the Hindi word for 'red', LAL![5]

Thus, Blanke (1985: 95) is right about the pointlessness of trying to ensure absolute internationality in a planned language: "A kind of absolute internationality would be reached, if in the vocabulary of a planned language all language of the world (proportional to its number of speakers) were represented. Such internationality would not be useful to anybody. The vocabulary would be extraordinarily heterogeneous and would be helpful for nobody."

Given that we cannot construct a viable language representing all linguistic properties drawn from the whole world on a meaningful basis, it is a rational decision to select some languages as one's control languages.

If the matter is put like this, we have to consider how to choose these control languages. It is plausible to propose the natural languages that play the IL role as suitable candidates.

Ammon defines "the international standing of a language" as "the extent to which the language is actually used for international communication, i.e., for communication between different nations" (2003: 231). There are some indicators for determining an international standing of a language: numerical strength, economic strength, political strength, cultural strength and pedagogic strength. These indicators are also useful in the context of the choice of control languages when constructing or evaluating a planned language.

According to the formula for calculating the communication potential (Q) of a language mentioned by De Swaan (2001: 33), the Q-value of a language is the product of two numbers: P and C. Here P is the prevalence of the language; it stands for the percentage of the total world population that speaks it fluently. C is the value of

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[5] Thanks to Probal Dasgupta for providing this interesting example.

the language as a common interlanguage; it stands for the percentage of the speakers of the language who have learnt more than one language. It is a generally appreciated fact that bi- and multilingual speakers connect the multilinguistic world into a whole. This being the case, Q can be taken to express the connecting capacity of the language. Thus, it is also acceptable to select some high Q-value languages as control languages when one proposes to construct or evaluate a planned language.

In summary, it is clear that linguistic neutrality is not an absolute concept. A language built on the basis of some purely formal absolute neutrality principle would not work as a language for humankind, because it would also have to fall in line with the known universals in human languages.[6] It would appear to be rational to create or evaluate a planned language based on (a) some control languages selected on the basis of the international standing of the relevant languages and (b) linguistic universals. Such a procedure leads to a system that is a mixed language, with distinct internationality profiles on different planes of linguistic structure. For instance, lexically, Esperanto can be considered mainly a Romance language. Morphologically, it is an agglutinating language with a strong similarity to isolating languages. At the levels of syntax and style, it exhibits a significant degree of Slavic influence. Functionally, it has served as an interlanguage for more than a century (Janton 1973, 1993; Piron 1981; Wells 1989). Nuessel gives Esperanto the following properties: "a planned, a posteriori language, an amalgamation of the linguistic elements of the various ethnic languages including Yiddish, Germanic, and Slavic tongues that were a part of Zamenhof's socially rancorous environment. The language also contained grammatical features of certain Romance languages with which Zamenhof was familiar" (Nuessel 2000: 41).

Unish, a system developed by the research team at Sejong

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[6] Liu (2006) presents an absolutely neutral planned language project.

University, is also an interesting and significant new planned language.[7] Its lexical material is drawn from 15 languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, German, Russian, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Hindi, Greek, Latin, and Esperanto). The basic principles for developing this new language are "ease" and "commonality" (Kwak 2003). The selection of control languages and other aspects of the methodology of its construction lead us to believe that the creators of Unish are trying to build an international language as linguistically neutral as possible. A comparison between Unish and Esperanto can be found in Lee (2002).

5. Deneutralization of an International Planned Language

There is more to say about the neutral language notion, however, because "even if some world-wide neutral language had been found, nothing would prevent it, after some generations, from thickening from a lingua franca into the mother tongue of some, as happened to Swahili, for example, with the consequence that once again neutrality would be lost and the whole process of designing a neutral language in need of being relaunched" (Van Parijs 2003). We call the process that a language changed from neutral to ordinary status as "deneutralization" of language.

We can compare the process of planned language development with the creolization of pidgins.[8] When a pidgin has enough native speakers, it is creolized. In our term, it is also deneutralized.

As mentioned above, Blanke establishes 18 stages of a planned

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[7] Unish means a universal language targeted to a lingua franca in the international communication. http://www.unish.org/.

[8] A detailed comparison between planned languages and pidgins/creoles is carried out in Liu (2001b). Kwak (2003) provides a comparison between Unish and pidgins.

language development from a project to a language, on the basis of practical usage. Of these, the last stage is the appearance of a *bilingual* speaker who has learned the planned language from birth (Blanke 1985: 112). Thus, the emergence of native speakers is an important milestone in the evolution of a planned language. In the following discussion, we are able to use Esperanto as an example. The absence of native speaker data in the case of other PLs or semi-PLs makes it impossible to attempt any meaningful comparisons in this domain.

It is possible, though, to find parallels in the case of the evolution of creoles. It is well known that native speakers are just as important or more in the development of a pidgin language; if a pidgin language is acquired by sufficiently many native speakers, then the pidgin will become a creole (though its speakers may choose not to call it that). For example, Mühlhäusler considers the process of creolization to be divisible into the following stages: "Jargon (pre-pidgin, multilingual idiolect, secondary hybrid)—Stable Pidgin (pidgin, basilectal pidgin, tertiary hybrid)—Expanded Pidgin —Creole" (Mühlhäusler 1997: 6).

Perhaps, in view of the importance of native speakers in the development of the language, Esperanto should be considered a creole language or at least some kind of object of "creolizatino" studies? Does creolization really take place in Esperanto? For serious creolization to occur, it is constitutively necessary that there be enough native speakers who use the language in question as their everyday first language. According to Corsetti (1999), the percentage of native speakers in Esperanto is only 4%, far from 10% of the total number—the proportion minimally required for creolization from pidgins. Not only are the native speakers in Esperanto not numerous enough; furthermore, the community is a diaspora. Native speakers hardly use Esperanto on a daily basis outside their families. In their case, Esperanto is only used in the family domain. Essentially, Esperanto is still their second or third

language. We can thus say, with Corsetti (1999: 47), that "from this viewpoint Esperanto is not in a state to be considered a creole language by creolists". Schubert also reaches a similar conclusion: "What about creolization in planned languages? At least for Esperanto, there are indeed persons who speak it as their native language. But their number, possibly a few hundred, is small compared with the language community, and they have no special standardizing influence of the development of Esperanto […] The language community as a whole is a pure second-language community. Esperanto, the planned language that has grown farthest into communicative use, is far from creolization" (Schubert 1989: 11). Although Esperanto functions mainly as a second language, nevertheless, it is not similar to other languages having this function. Wood rightly says, "the status of Esperanto as a second language for its users is different from that of ethnic languages which have been acquired as second languages by learners faced by the economic, political and educational pressures which make such acquisition necessary or desirable" (Wood 1979: 435).

Versteegh (1993: 593) argues "the acquisition of Esperanto as a first language is a special case of language acquisition with restricted input, since the monitoring parents are not native speakers of Esperanto themselves. Consequently, the case of the denaskaj esperantistoj (native speaker esperantists) may be compared with the process of creolization, in which children acquire a language variety that is by definition not the native language of the parents". If we follow Versteegh's definition in understanding the notion "creolization", creolization of Esperanto is comparable to creolization of pidgins. Therefore, we think that Gledhill (2000: 42) is also right: "The relationship between Esperanto and creoles is therefore more abstract: the transformation of Pidgins into Creoles may be reflected in the development of Esperanto from a schematic design to a relatively widely-used language". It follows that the "creolization" of pidgins is somewhat similar to the socialization of

planned languages.

Moreover, as we saw in Ferguson's diglossias, complementary distribution contributes to maintenance: the formal variety is not habitually used in everyday communication and therefore rarely becomes a mother tongue (Bastardas i Boada 2002).

In short, the statements about the creolization of Esperanto that occasionally surface in the literature are only metaphorical. As far as its status is concerned, a planned language is more similar to a pidgin than to a creole, although it is intended for wider usage than a pidgin is. In other words, indicators of deneutralization (in the sense derived from the work of Van Parijs) have not yet become observable even in the most developed planned language Esperanto, where one would a prior imagine that the conditions for deneutralization would be most favorable. The auxiliary function of a planned language, we conclude, keeps it neutral for a very long time indeed. The conclusions Van Parijs seems to have drawn from such cases as Swahili possibly have to do with the fact that Esperanto is indeed a planned language, whereas neither Swahili, nor Indonesian, nor Modern Hebrew is really in the same league as Esperanto as far as social realities are concerned.

6. Conclusion

At the beginning of the paper, we offered a working definition of the notion of an international language. The conceptualization of an international communicative act leads, in this paper, to the idea of a neutral language. A neutral language for international communication can only be a planned language. Certain characterizations of the consciously created languages are discussed, leading to the choice of the least controversial term "(international) planned language" for our purposes. In order to articulate adequately the notion of neutrality, we focus on the neutrality of an international

auxiliary language or international planned language in terms of a distinction between two types: communicative neutrality and linguistic neutrality. All planned languages are communicatively neutral, but their linguistic neutrality varies, reflecting the diversity of language design principles. Communicative neutrality involves all users having to learn the language in order to be able to use it as a means of communication; linguistic neutrality has to do with maximizing equality of access for the learners with different mother tongues.

Evidently, it is not an easy task to construct a language linguistically equidistant from all the languages of the world. In practice, absolute linguistic neutrality is neither practicable nor a fair representation of our task, because our goal is to create a language for humankind, which involves taking language universals on board. In this perspective, constructing a language based on some control languages coupled with systematic attention to linguistic universals is perhaps a rational procedure, if the control languages are selected from the set of languages that are in international use.

We also introduced a concept of "deneutralization" to express a process whereby a neutral language changes into an ordinary language as a consequence of the proportion of its native speakers rising beyond a critical threshold. We consider the case of Esperanto, inquiring whether the relevant processes in Esperanto are comparable to the creolization of pidgins, a better understood phenomenon. Our finding is that there have been no indicators of deneutralization in the planned language in the 119 years of its existence.

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