

Propagating the Language You Didn't Know You Knew

An artificial universal language said to be less culturally divisive and more easily learned and used than all its predecessors is struggling to make itself heard. Gemini News Service listens in.

Nicola Cole writes from London

PROponents of a universal, artificial language, which will unite the world in a common tongue have a new candidate — Glosa.

Its tiny band of enthusiasts says it is "the language of the future," and will put Esperanto and other manufactured lingoes in the shade.

Glosa, whose propagators call it "an *internatio lingua tu ne ski tu ski*" — the international language you didn't know you knew — was launched in March 1992 and is already being taught or actively spoken by groups in 20 countries.

Among them are Taiwan, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States. In Uganda alone, says British disciple Wendy Ashby, at least 40 teachers have learned it at training colleges and are now themselves spreading it by means of courses and village classes that collectively involve about 1,600 adults and youngsters.

A number of Tanzanian children are fluent in Glosa as well as the official Kiswahili and English, says Ashby.

In the US, she notes, it has found acceptance in some "deep south" schools around Atlanta, Georgia, where teachers want to include it as a regular curriculum subject. Educators in Wisconsin are also showing strong interest. A Boston publisher is considering a full-colour book on Glosa.

Meanwhile, two Taiwan study groups are working on the auxiliary language, said to be "pluto, flexi e jo-facile de disci" — rich, flexible

and extremely easy to learn.

So easy, in fact, that it is further claimed Glosa can be assimilated within days, against the two-to-three years needed to master Esperanto, which is nonetheless used by at least one million people.

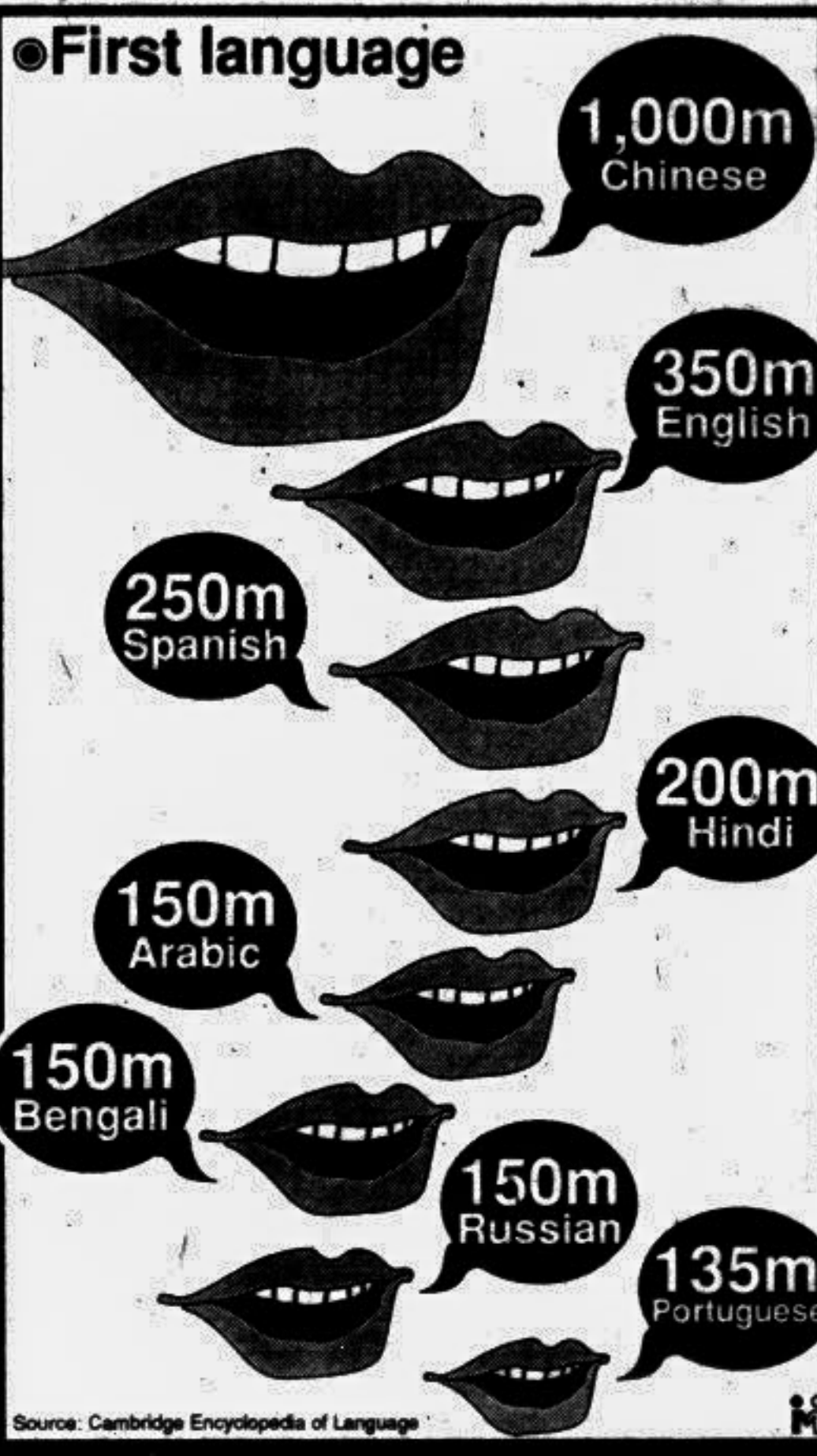
This is a major reason for Glosa's progress, with enquiries coming from Australia, China, India, Japan and most European states. European Union MP's and European Commission staff have discussed whether Glosa could "kontribui a solutio de komunika e u lingua problema in Euro-Komunita" — provide a solution to the Union's communication problem through inclusion in school syllabuses.

Glosa's origin is Interglosa, devised 51 years ago by English scientist and philologist Lancelot Hogben on the basis of 880 classical words and roots "which easily suffice for any theme."

Logical maybe, unappealing certainly — until businesswoman Ashby and her fellow disciple, teacher Ron Clark, realised "the enormous potential" in practical applications of Professor Hogben's intellectual exercise, the latest development in a search dating back three centuries.

With the Professor's blessing, Ashby and Clark spent the next 20 years modifying Interglosa, publishing multilingual dictionaries and cassettes and promoting a quick-writing system plus pen-friend networks, all within a cost-covering but non-profit frame-

What they speak



work.

They also "considered it better" to rename the fully-phonetic language Glosa — the Greek for tongue, pronounced "glorser."

Chief features include a 1,000-word core vocabulary of Greek and Latin roots, flexions

replaced by two-letter foreshortenings (*fu* = future; *pa* = past), tenses represented by permutations of words like *nu* (now) and participles serving as nouns as well as adjectives. There is no grammar in the usual sense.

Baffling to anyone unfamiliar with the Romance languages of Europe? Surprisingly not; structural similarities such as the interchangeability of nouns and verbs make Glosa acceptable to those perhaps most likely to reject it — the ideogram-centred Chinese and Japanese.

Medikas e teknologis — doctors and technologists of many different nationalities similarly attest to its usefulness in improving cross-border understanding.

But will Glosa — used by "thousands rather than millions," Wendy Ashby *knofesi* (admits) — ultimately eclipse Volapuk, created by a Swiss abbot in 1879; Esperanto, developed eight years later by the Polish eye-specialist Ludwig Zamenhof; its ido offshoot (1907); the intervening Interlingua (a simplified form of Latin, 1903); Novial (1928); Piktio (1944); and the Italian-devised Neo (1961) to name but some?

If these had been truly workable, one of them would by now have been adopted alongside or in place of the world's 5,000 or so natural languages, asserts Ashby in her modest London office.

Some people assure her "the others have failed, yours will too," but she remains convinced that Glosa is going to win and help promote world harmony.

It is, says Ashby: "Ethnically neutral, yet everyone sees something familiar in it... We would like to think we have benefited from all the previous attempts."

Britain's independent Associated Examining Board believes that although Glosa might never overtake other languages, it has good potential as "some form of interpretation" channel.

In Brussels, where translation costs the European Commission a minimum of £10 per minute, *u judika es extra* — the jury is still out; in other words, no decision on Glosa and no endorsement just yet.

NICOLA COLE is a British freelance journalist.

What is Progress?

by Rashida Ahmad

THE world is changing. This is not a new phenomenon. The universe has been expanding since its birth. The earth has been evolving since its creation. The cosmos is in perpetual flux and very few elements in it have remained constant or unchanged.

We humans however seem incapable of viewing change without speaking of progress. We look back and see 'the ascent of man', as the acquisition of new skills from the time we first stood erect. We see each individual life as a progression from birth to death; the evolution of species from the simple to the complex. We speak of time itself 'marching on-ward'.... But we must be careful to distinguish between the abstract notion of progress which is simply change over time, and the more affirmative meaning of progress towards some goal.

When we speak of the development of mankind from the cave via the Bronze and Iron ages, the agricultural and industrial ages to the present technological age which kind of progress do we mean?

plets after thousands of dollars worth of fertility treatment while children in the streets of Brazil are shot and exterminated like vermin; or forced to prostitute themselves on the streets of every capital city in every continent?

First world nations encourage third world nations to buy bigger and better weapons in order to add the horror of war to the horrors of poverty and disease — in what sense is this an 'improvement' on our past?

A billion people are starving today while enough food to feed them all is stockpiled to protect global economic interests — how is this to be considered progress of any kind?

Does spending millions of dollars keeping the hearts of dead men beating for fear of being sued by their families indicate the superior intelligence of modern man?

Developed countries pay to dump toxic waste in developing countries — who does this benefit in the long run?

Does keeping a golf course in the Nevada desert lush and green, while the desertification of Africa increases, go to make the world a better

When considering the progress of mankind why is it that we unquestionably believe that we have advanced from the cave to the condominium, from fire to electricity, from the abacus to the laptop computer?

In-Your-Face Book Gives Cred to Pink Pound

IF, while using the zipper to boost the volume of some schlock programme featuring carjackings and body-bags, you should happen to crave munchies, then the mediagenic staff at Chambers will help sort you out. They may not be able to satiate your appetite for food but they will certainly define, for all those scratching their heads, exactly what it is that you are doing.

With the help of extensive computer databases and two years work by 22 employees, the *Chambers Encyclopedic English Dictionary* is being hailed as the new word in English words — if not the first or most certainly the last.

Hitting bookshelves 239 years after Samuel Johnson published his *Dictionary of the English Language*, the 1,452-page effort boasts of attempting or re-write the dictionary page, which it labels "one of the last nesting places of cryptic, ritualised English." The volume's slang, colloquialisms and abbreviations make Johnson turn in his grave but the publishers insist their work is a serious contribution to the understanding of the language which is long overdue.

"We're trying to represent language as culture, not just as abstract words," Editor Robert Allen said in an interview. "We're trying to put it into the context of society as a whole."

British publisher Chambers has unveiled what it claims is the new word in dictionaries. Gemini News Service reports on the new book which is likely to make language traditionalists gag (retch, be sick) and reformists *cero* (jive dancing to rock-and-roll music) in the streets.

Daniel Girard writes from London



Armed with that credo, the dictionary staff have assembled two million words and phrases, 1,000 illustrations, 120 tables, 180 political maps and 12 pages of coloured maps to help give meaning to expressions such as *zapper* (a remote-control device for a television or video recorder), *schlock* (shoddy production), *carjacking* (the practice of hijacking a car with its driver and passengers), *body-bag* (a bag made of heavy material used to transport a dead body, especially that of a war casualty or accident victim), *munchies* (food to snack on) and *mediagenic* (able to communicate well).

Allen said the staff compiling the book's entries referred to newspapers, magazines, ra-

dio and television as well as novels and other literature as part of their New World Monitoring Programme. Each month they collect 500 new words or meanings from different regions including Britain, North America, Australia and Asia, he said. There are plans to update the encyclopedic dictionary every two years, Allen added.

(This) is a completely new type of English language dictionary," Allen writes in the book's preface. The promotional literature for the volume insists it ends the schism (the act of encouraging separation) begun with Johnson's publication in 1755 which has "led to people having to buy separate dictionaries and encyclopedias for over two centuries."

Competitors were quick to condemn some of Chambers' new words as nothing but old hat. One member of the editorial team at the *Oxford English Dictionary* pointed out that co-cooning (the practice of choosing to spend one's spare time with a partner or one's family rather than taking part in more social activities) and co-dependency (the condition of seeking to fulfil one's emotional needs by caring for or controlling a dependant) are a decade old.

However, there are many other words and expressions in the volume which are unique. Rather than being something done at the seaside, *shrimping* is defined as an act done bedside: (the practice of sucking a partner's toes for sexual stimulation), which was popularised by former British Cabinet Minister David Mellor and splashed across newspapers worldwide by royal holiday-maker — the Duchess of York. Scores of other entries are as equally *in-your-face* (aggressively assertive; demanding attention) and certainly not lacking cred (credibility).

Allen said there is a *bonzer* (excellent) reason for deciding to publish the dictionary in 1994: computer databases make it much more efficient and economical to produce. And while certainly not discouraging the *pink-pound* (the combined purchasing power of homosexuals considered as a consumer group) from buying the book, he said from the perspective of *niche marketing* (marketing of a product aimed at relatively small and specialised group of consumers) the book is more designed for families.

Allen would not discuss sales targets for the new publication but the executives at Chambers are certainly hoping 'it will be a *humongous* (huge, enormous) success.'

DANIEL GIRARD is a reporter with *The Toronto Star* newspaper.

While it may be true that for humans time only moves in one direction, forward, it is not the case that all change over a period of time is an advancement towards something better. We need only to look at the cycle of seasons to see that change does not always entail linear progression. Physics illustrates that a sequence of events is not always irreversible. Change can be circular or it can be fluctuation. It does not inherently entail improvement in one direction.

But when considering the progress of mankind why is it that we unquestionably believe that we have advanced from the cave to the condominium, from fire to electricity, from the abacus to the laptop computer? In the light of the cycle of births and deaths, of wars and peace, of famine and bounty, of morality and decadence that have coloured human existence throughout history, the notion of any ultimate progress towards some overall good can be considered a fallacy.

So what is the Progress we speak of today?

Is it the thousandfold increase in energy that modern man consumes compared with a hunter-gatherer of the past; or is it the fact that 25 per cent of the world's population abuses 75 per cent of the earth's resources? Is it a woman giving birth to sextu-

place?

An 11 year old anorexic girl in the West starves to death by 'choice' while an 11 year old somewhere else starves because there is no food available.

Are these 'developments' to be called the progress of humanity? Is this the advancement that we must without protest yield to as being for the good of mankind?

Or might we just realise in time that rather than development, it is merely change that we have power over, that we can control the pace and direction of, in order to make true improvement in a positive direction for the benefit of all human beings. We may not be able to check the arrow of time but we are able to arrest the present development of mankind and steer the change in a different direction if we really want to. We have that power — there is nothing inevitable about the changes that we ourselves have made. For everything we have gained, something has been lost — nothing comes from nothing. Perhaps some of what we have left behind in the pursuit of so-called progress and technological advances — idealism, faith and hope — are worth regaining. Perhaps it is time we altered the path of our change and realised that not all change is Progress. Perhaps it is time to change the way we are changing.

A Memorable Trip with Children from Norway

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain



Norwegian children performing a dance.

Sail boats are seldom visible these days in the rivers from Buriganga to Meghna-Padma in contrast to yachts plying in the sea in Arendal, a popular sport there.

However, the children and their parents were amazed to see the vastness of river expanse with no bank or shore visible at the confluence of Meghna and Padma near Chandpur. At Chandpur steamer, what the children



Chandpur Kachi-Kanchar Mela children performing a dance at Chandpur Officer's Club.

From Norway were again overwhelmed by spontaneous reception accorded by Kachi-Kanchar Mela. A large number of children lined up and greeted them with bouquets of flowers and green coconut waters at the compound of Chandpur Officers Club.

From Chandpur they went by a tourist bus to Comilla — the seat of Buddhist civilization and also a pioneer in introducing modern cooperative system. At the Town Hall of Comilla a cultural function was organised for them. The hall was packed with children and elite of the town where children of Purbasha and Madhumita Kachi-Kanchar Mela entertained the guests from Norway with dance drama depicting culture of Bangladesh. It was a neat presentation by the children of Comilla which is rich in cultural heritage. Despite being

on either side of the road, epitaphs are also spread over the hilltop as well. Each epitaph contains the name of the soldier and his regiment. Along with Europeans a few Muslim warriors were also laid to rest at the cemetery which is still maintained excellently. Flower plants and decorative bushes make the cemetery serene in an even tranquil atmosphere. At the centre on the hilltop one can view a plaque with crucifix. While children from Norway were at the cemetery, the American Ambassador to Bangladesh Mr Merrill along with his wife also paid a visit. A pleasant coincidence, indeed.

From Comilla the children started for Sreemongal but the engine of the bus developed serious trouble in the way. And at Saistaganj the driver took the bus to a workshop. Here the children got down and while moving around the area, they came across a *jambura* (grape-fruit) seller. The fruit evoked curiosity in them. And having a taste, they in fact liked the fruit very much.

In the afternoon they reached Sreemongal Victoria High School compound again to a flowery reception by the local children. Programmes at Sreemongal began with the visit to tea gardens and tea processing factory of James Finlay. They were taken round the tea processing factory by the Manager and shown the process from drying to packaging of tea for sale. Each of the members was presented a packet of tea. An interesting get together with the man-

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