

## **Part 1. Listening**

### **Script**

**Presenter:** Today we have with us linguist Nick Harper to tell us a bit about the forgotten language of Esperanto. Nick, whatever happened to Esperanto? Does anyone speak it nowadays?

**Nick:** Well, yes, they do actually. There are an estimated 1.6 million speakers of Esperanto in the world today.

**Presenter:** That's amazing. So, tell us something about the history of the language.

**Nick:** Well, it was developed at the end of the nineteenth century by a Polish doctor called Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof. His idea was that people of different countries could communicate in a common language. He thought this would help to avoid conflict between nations and prevent wars.

**Presenter:** But why invent a new language? Why not convert one of the existing ones?

**Nick:** Well, Zamenhof thought that the major languages of the day – French, German, Russian, and English – were too difficult for people to learn. He also believed that a native speaker would always have the advantage in a discussion with non-native speakers. So that's why he proposed a new language where everyone would be equal. That language was Esperanto.

**Presenter:** So, Esperanto is easier to learn than other languages?

**Nick:** Yes, much easier. It's an artificial language made up of five vowels and twenty-three consonants with phonetic spelling, logical grammar rules, and regular verb ending. Experts say that for an English speaker, Esperanto is five times easier to learn than French or Spanish, ten times easier than Russian, and twenty times easier than Chinese or Arabic.

**Presenter:** It sounds perfect! So, what happened? Why aren't we all speaking Esperanto?

**Nick:** Well, in the beginning Esperanto was quite successful, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and in the old Soviet Union. There was even talk of replacing Chinese with Esperanto after 1911 revolution in China, but of course this never happened.

**Presenter:** So, who uses Esperanto today?

**Nick:** Well, it's still spoken as a second language in about ninety countries of the world, it's on the school curriculum in China, Hungary, and Bulgaria, and it's also being taught in some British schools as a way of helping students to learn other languages.

**Presenter:** Thank you, Nick Harper, for talking to us.

**Pause 20 sec.**

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