The European Union has over 20 official languages, as well as more than 60 regional and minority languages, which results in an enormous amount of money being spent every day on translations and interpreting. The Swiss economist François Grin was asked to look into this issue, and in 2005, he published a report which concluded, not surprisingly, that using just one country’s language – only German, for example – would give an unfair advantage to speakers of that language. Moreover, if the EU chose three languages that would still be unfair on the many other countries whose language was not chosen. The best option, the report concludes, would be to use a “constructed language” – that is, an artificial language which has been specially invented for the purpose of making communication easier. By far the best-known constructed language is Esperanto. The report concludes that in addition to the ideological advantages, the adoption of Esperanto would save the European Union an astonishing 25 billion euros a year.

Esperanto was invented in 1877 by L. L. Zamenhof, a Polish eye doctor. It is an artificial language which aims to facilitate international understanding, co-operation and to promote harmony and peace between countries. Zamenhof wanted to make learning Esperanto as easy as possible, so its vocabulary and grammar are simple. Linguists estimate that Esperanto can be learned in 5%-25% of the time required to learn other languages. For example, one study suggested that French school students would need to study English for 1,500 hours, but Esperanto for only 150 hours, to reach the same level of proficiency. That is, for those students it would be ten times easier to learn Esperanto than English. It has also been shown that learning Esperanto makes it easier to learn a third language. In one study, a group of students learned Esperanto for one year and then French for three years. At the end of the four years, they were significantly better at French than a control group which had studied French for all four years.

Despite all these good reasons for learning Esperanto, the fact remains that it still isn’t spoken by many people: there are probably only between one to two thousand native speakers of Esperanto – that is, people who have learned the language as small children from their Esperanto-speaking parents – and it is estimated that the number of people who have “some knowledge” of Esperanto is probably only somewhere between one and two million speakers at the most. In contrast, there are about 400 million native English-speakers and perhaps 1.1 billion people speak it as a secondary language. The problem for Esperanto is one of co-ordination – it is an idea which can only really work if a lot of people adopt it simultaneously. There is no point in learning Esperanto unless many other people do as well. Zamenhof himself said that it might take “many centuries” for Esperanto to become a universal language.

**To result in:** comportar
**To look into:** estudiar, investigar
**Unfair:** injust / injusto
**To aim to:** tenir com a objectiu / tener el objetivo de
**Proficiency:** competència / competencia
PART 1: Reading comprehension

Choose the best answer according to the text. Only ONE answer is correct.
[3 points: 0.375 points for each correct answer. Wrong answers will be penalized by deducting 0.125 points. There is no penalty for unanswered questions.]

1. François Grin
   a) chose three official languages for the EU.
   b) suggested that German was the most important language.
   c) wanted more money for translators and interpreters.
   d) did not feel it was a good idea to use three official languages in the EU.

2. Grin’s report
   a) had no conclusions.
   b) resulted in surprising conclusions.
   c) ignored ideological and financial benefits.
   d) encouraged adopting Esperanto into the EU.

3. Zamenhof
   a) thought Esperanto could make the world a better place.
   b) studied Esperanto as a student in Poland.
   c) wanted to learn an easy language.
   d) cooperated with other linguists to promote peace between countries.

4. French students of Esperanto
   a) complain that the vocabulary is too simple.
   b) can expect to make rapid progress.
   c) prefer it to English because it is easier.
   d) usually reach the same level of proficiency in Esperanto and English.

5. The text suggests that
   a) a lot of people are combining the study of Esperanto and French.
   b) Esperanto is easier to learn as a third language.
   c) learning Esperanto makes foreign language learning easier.
   d) Esperanto is a useful language to know.

6. Which of these statements is NOT true?
   a) It has been shown that small children are better at Esperanto because they learn it naturally.
   b) Esperanto is the first language some children learn.
   c) Although there are good reasons to learn Esperanto not many people do so.
   d) It’s not known for certain how many people speak Esperanto.

7. According to the text
   a) over a billion people speak English as their first language.
   b) there aren’t enough speakers of Esperanto.
   c) a lot of people will start learning Esperanto when they see its importance.
   d) Zamenhof was sure that centuries from now Esperanto would be the universal language.

8. The writer of the text
   a) encourages readers to learn Esperanto.
   b) informs readers about Esperanto.
   c) gives a negative opinion about Esperanto.
   d) wants to learn Esperanto.
PART 2: Writing

Choose ONE topic. Your answer should be 125-150 words in length. There is no specific penalty for exceeding 150 words in length. Extra points are not given for exceeding 150 words. [4 points]
1. Do you prefer watching films in foreign languages with subtitles or dubbed into your own language? **Write an opinion essay.**
2. Should students be obligated to learn more than one foreign language at school? **Write an opinion essay.**
A LANGUAGE FOR ALL

Answers
1. d
2. d
3. a
4. b
5. c
6. a
7. b
8. b