

Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village

BY SYLVAN ZAFT

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Preface and Acknowledgments

Chapter 1: The Dream and the Reality

Chapter 2: Esperanto—Then and Now

Chapter 3: The Ultimate Authority in Esperanto

Chapter 4: Spelling Esperanto

Chapter 5: Pronouncing Esperanto

Chapter 6: Ambiguity or Understanding

Chapter 7: Where English is an Easy Language Too

Chapter 8: The Cost-Benefit Ratio

Chapter 9: Real Life Experiences With Esperanto

Chapter 10: No Stumbling Over Idioms

Chapter 11: Word Formation in Esperanto

Chapter 12: The Pattern-Making Power of the Human Mind

Chapter 13: One Word-Many Words

Chapter 14: Can Feelings be Expressed in Esperanto?

Chapter 15: A Minor Difficulty of Esperanto

Chapter 16: A Major Difficulty of Esperanto

Chapter 17: Two Ways to Form New Words

Chapter 18: Two More Difficulties of Esperanto

Chapter 19: A Fine Literary Language

Chapter 20: A Still Easier Language

Chapter 21: The Propagandists and the Raumists

Chapter 22: Esperanto and Education

Chapter 23: The Resistance to Esperanto

Chapter 24: A Unique Language for the Whole World

Appendix and Bibliography

Preface and Acknowledgements

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This is the preface to a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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When I read Claude Piron's *Le défi des langues: du gâchis au bon sens* soon after it came out in 1994, I felt very strongly the need for this kind of book for non-specialists in English. *Le défi des langues* presents the need for and the value of Esperanto to readers of French. It shows how enormous are the difficulties of learning foreign languages, and how the enormity of those difficulties is usually overlooked. It explains the huge and unnecessary costs of the present methods that are most widely used for inter-lingual communication, costs that are both monetary and other than monetary. It demonstrates how Esperanto works in theory and in practice and those features of the language that make possible rapid and deep communication after only months of study.

Le défi des langues points out how we are led to believe that we can master a foreign national language in a reasonable amount of time whereas the truth is altogether different. There are all kinds of advertisements that promise us that we will be speaking a foreign language after using a self-help book or some tapes or some video tapes or a CD-ROM. What these advertisements never show us is testimonials from individuals who, after using the product as directed, found themselves able to engage in in-depth discussions of their favorite topics, whether they be sports or public affairs or philosophy or gourmet cooking. To be able to say "How much does that cost?" and "Where are the rest rooms" and "The dress is blue" is certainly helpful, but it does not equate with speaking a language in anything like the sense in which we speak our native language.

Translating *Le défi des langues* presents major challenges because the linguistic examples are, of course, aimed at native speakers of French. Most of them would be only confusing to English readers who have not learned a great deal of French.

I have written *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* to provide English readers with a book that will present the need for Esperanto clearly and in an interesting way. *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* is not a work of propaganda that ignores the major criticisms that have been directed at the Esperanto. It presents the features of Esperanto that have been criticized as being too difficult and examines them in terms of their cost-benefit ratio. It compares the features of Esperanto with the features of other languages. *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* is not a book by a linguist and it is not a book for linguists. It is a book for those non-specialists who may not be interested in learning Esperanto but who are definitely interested in learning about Esperanto, about the features of this language, how it was developed and how it is used in practice by those who communicate freely and naturally with each other in a common tongue which they were able to learn in a reasonable amount of time.

This book obviously owes much to the work of Claude Piron. He is quoted and referred to in many places. For those who read French I cannot recommend too highly *Le défi des langues* and for those who read Esperanto I cannot recommend too highly *La bona lingvo*.

A number of errors have been avoided through corrections offered by Jan Olds and William Harmon. Fellow Michigan Esperantists including Kurt Jung, Robert Sterns, Sherry Wells and Sheila Devlin have offered much encouragement and they too have made useful suggestions and pointed out errors. I am grateful for all of this assistance.

David Richardson went over the manuscript in a very thorough and authoritative way. He found a great many errors and made many suggestions for tightening the text. In several places he suggested improved language which I have incorporated into this version. Because of his help *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* is better organized, easier to read and more accurate. I deeply appreciate his generous help.

Because I have used my own judgment as to which suggestions to accept and which ones to forego, I am naturally responsible for any remaining errors and shortcomings.

I would also like to thank Paul Lutus for his web-editor program *Arachnophilia* which he has generously made available as careware, asking in return only that users devote just one day to "saying the important things, of performing the kindnesses that naturally occur to us when each day might be our last." *Arachnophilia* automatically converted the tables in *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village*, making it easy to transform the manuscript into hypertext markup language. Those interested in downloading *Arachnophilia* may find it at:

www.arachnoid.com

I hope some day that *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* will appear in a paper version. However, since it is very easy nowadays to make a document public electronically I am taking advantage of this to put out *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* in this form so that it can be immediately useful to anyone who has access to the Internet. At the same time I invite comments and corrections so that any remaining errors can be expunged.

Sylvan Zaft
Farmington, Michigan
March, 1998

Chapter One

The Dream and the Reality

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This is the first chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village.

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The Dream

The dream is beautiful. All over the world everyone studies a certain easy-to-learn language for just one year (or a year and a half) and then anyone can go anywhere in the world and talk with anyone else even though the two people do not know even a single word of each other's native tongue.

Imagine this: An American woman visits a city in central China. She wanders away from the hotel where the staff has some basic knowledge of English. She winds up in a small market where she spots a little treasure that she would like to buy. No one in the market can speak English and she knows no Chinese, but this does not bother her at all. She simply starts speaking in the one language that everyone in the world has studied. She is confident that the Chinese sales clerk will be able to understand her perfectly and that she will be able to understand him perfectly.

More than just being able to understand each other, she discovers that there is an instant little bond between the clerk and her. Both of them have taken the same course so that they would be able to talk with each other. Both of them studied the same language in their respective classrooms half a world apart so that they would be prepared for this moment. Both of them made the same kind of effort, studying and learning this neutral, common, easy-to-learn language, and now they find that they can communicate with each other as effectively and as comfortably as they do with their compatriots in their native tongues. In some sense they are both part of a world community, a community that is now made up of all the people in the world because everyone knows how to talk to everyone else without ever having to devote long hard years of study in an attempt to master someone else's very difficult language.

Imagine this: A young Japanese woman wants to travel to America. Although she has studied English for twelve years and although she can read the language to a fair degree, she knows that she speaks poorly and is frequently misunderstood.

However, according to this dream, she has no problem. Wherever she goes, she simply uses the one easy language that everyone in the world has spent a year or so studying, and everyone she speaks to understands her and communicates with her in that language just as easily and effectively as if they were both native speakers of the same national tongue. In a

Taco Bell restaurant in a Mississippi Delta town, on public transportation in Boston, wherever she goes throughout the United States, she is at home linguistically.

This is the dream.

An American wants to write to a Senegalese in West Africa where French is the common language of the elite. The American writes in the language that everyone has studied, and the African responds in that same language. A Greek wants to communicate by electronic mail with a Moroccan about a business deal. He knows that the Moroccan understands Arabic and French which the Greek, who knows four languages but not those two, has no knowledge of. There is, of course, no problem. The Greek simply sends his e-mail message in the easy language which everyone has studied, and the Moroccan, at his computer, sends his reply in the same language. Communication is easy, as one would expect it to be in an electronic age.

At international business conferences, at meetings between representatives of different governments, at the United Nations and other international organizations, business goes much more smoothly than in the old days before the easy language was universally adopted for international use. Speakers from many different countries who have many different native tongues speak freely and comfortably in turn, and everyone present listens to their voices (not the voices of interpreters) and understands what they are saying.

When the President of the United States wants to have a private conversation with the President of the Russian Republic or the President of China, there is no need to have a third or a fourth person present to relay their thoughts. They speak directly to each other in the one easy language that everyone knows, and they enjoy complete privacy.

And children send messages to each other around the world.

The world has truly become a global village because, just as in a regular village, everyone can talk to everyone else, confident of being understood.

Of course there are still quarrels and wars and disagreements. Criminality and selfishness and chauvinism have not vanished from the face of the earth. However, when people disagree with each other, they can now communicate that disagreement directly and clearly and they do not have to turn it over to some intermediary who may unintentionally distort it and magnify it.

The Reality

What is the actual situation in the world today?

If our American woman in central China wanders into a small shop the odds are that the people there will not understand her at all and that she will not understand them. She will not be able to ask questions about the attractive object that has caught her eye. She will not be able to ask what it is made out of or whether a discount is available if she buys a number of such items. Shopping will be a rudimentary affair and often frustrating, and she will feel like a stranger operating in a strange place.

The young Japanese woman in the United States will be able to communicate to some degree, but only haltingly, and with quite a bit of misunderstanding. This is because she is one of the vast majority of people who have no special gift for very difficult languages. (For the Japanese, English is very difficult, just as Japanese is very difficult for Americans.)

She realizes that she does not understand thousands of American idioms and everyday expressions. If people were to say things like, "You'll get over it" or "Get off your high horse" or "Freeze!" she would not really understand them. She is so uncomfortable speaking this foreign English tongue that even those words which she has studied do not come easily, and she has to smile a lot, embarrassed, and admit that she does not understand much of what is being said.

When the young woman asks directions on the street she will not be confident that she is being understood; following those directions, because of her misunderstanding, she may find herself in a very dangerous neighborhood.

The American who wants to communicate to the Senegalese will either have to find someone to translate his letter into French (never mind the Senegalese's native Wolof) or else send the letter in English and hope that the Senegalese will be able to hunt up a competent local translator to make the letter comprehensible to him. The Greek will have to find someone who knows French or Arabic to write the message he wants to send by e-mail. The American, the Senegalese, the Greek and the Moroccan, when it comes to this kind of international communication, find themselves back in the times when most people were illiterate and were obliged to employ professional scribes to write and read their letters for them. This is a very odd reality in an age of instant electronic mail.

In today's world the situation at international meetings whether it be a matter of business meetings or academic meetings or meetings of organizations like the United Nations or the European Economic Community, is exceedingly complex.

Sometimes one language, usually English or French, is used. This is wonderful for the native speakers of the favored language and for those fortunate few who have mastered that tongue after thousands of hours of very hard study and practice. The problem is that a great many people who have extraordinary gifts in their particular field do not have extraordinary gifts when it comes to the study of foreign languages. Forced to use a language they are not fluent in, they can make very few remarks, and they miss much of what is going on.

Sometimes in order to cope with this kind of situation, organizations decide to send as their representatives individuals who have a fine gift for foreign languages even though those individuals may be mediocre in the field which the meeting is held to discuss.

All of this results in what has been called linguistic discrimination. Native speakers of English, let us say, can speak freely without ever having to have spent a minute seriously studying a foreign language while those who are not native speakers of English have to struggle to express themselves and to understand what is going on in a language which they have only learned to a certain extent in spite of many years of dedicated study.

This situation is not at all equal. It is, to put it very simply, grossly unfair.

For Americans to imagine how unfair this situation is they would have to conceive of a world in which all international meetings and most international communication are held in Mandarin Chinese, that language which more people presently speak than any other. All Americans would have to spend many years of study to try to master Chinese or else they would have to give up any hope of being effective in international work. If this were proposed, Americans would vociferously protest. They would be outraged at the very suggestion. They would never put up with such an unfair, unthinkable situation. Unfortunately, it is just that kind of situation that those people who are not native speakers of English face today.

Those people whose native languages are structurally similar to English have a far better chance of mastering English. Scandinavians, Germans and Dutch speak Germanic languages. A larger proportion of people who speak these tongues are able to master English after thousands of hours of study and practice because English also is a Germanic language. Native speakers of some other languages spoken which by very large numbers of people, such as the young Japanese women in the example above, never become comfortable in English even after as many as twelve years of study!

Nowadays, at many international meetings simultaneous translation is used so that people who do not speak the same language can communicate with each other. A speaker speaks in one language, and all the translators, sitting in their little booths, repeat what they hear in the other languages. Those in attendance who do not understand the language of a speaker put on little headphones which can become quite uncomfortable after hours of use and listen not directly to the speaker but to the translators.

The big problem with these translations is that they are notoriously inaccurate. Sometimes when translators have an especially good day, they do very well, but, generally speaking, they have to abbreviate and distort what is said. This is partly because languages are so different from each other.

Consider phrases that start with a series of adjectives. In English adjectives come before a noun as in "This intelligent, forward-looking, progressive, brilliant...." In French, with few exceptions, the adjectives come after the noun. So translators into French have to wait until English speakers pronounce the noun before they can begin the French version of the sentence. When the people in the little booths finally translate the first part of what was said, they may miss a little bit of what follows. Sometimes that "little bit" can be crucial.

Imagine people giving speeches in German, where the verb often comes at the end of a long sentence. Those who translate the speeches into English have to listen to the very end of a long sentence before they can say the verb in English right after the subject at the start of the sentence. Again, while finally pronouncing the English version of one sentence, the translator may be distracted from understanding the beginning of the next one.

The economic burdens of translation, whether oral or written, are enormous. Claude Piron, who has worked as a translator at the United Nations and the World Health Organization, gives a number of examples that illustrate this. Perhaps the most cogent of these examples is that of the 28th World Health Assembly, the legislative organ of the World Health Organization, which met in 1975. The Assembly voted to adopt Arabic and Chinese as two additional working languages. By this vote the delegates showed great and appropriate respect for the hundreds of millions of people who are native speakers of these two languages. By this vote they added \$5,000,000 a year to the costs of translating.

Later, during that same session, the Assembly considered a group of carefully worked out proposals that would have ameliorated the terrible health conditions in sub-Saharan Africa. After learning that the cost of these proposed programs was \$4,200,000 the delegates rejected them due to insufficient funds.

Today when the President of the United States wants to speak privately with the President of the Russian Republic or the President of the People's Republic of China, the two men have to speak privately with a third person present. One of them has to provide a translator. If the other president wants to be certain that what he is saying is being translated correctly, then he too has to provide a translator, and what was supposed to be a private conversation between two people takes place with four people present.

Conversations that employ the services of interpreters do not flow as smoothly as conversations held directly in a language in which both speakers are comfortable. One president says something. A translator puts it in the other president's language. The other president responds. A translator puts it in the first president's language. The conversation goes on at half of its normal speed. An enormous amount of time is wasted. And spontaneity goes out the window.

In today's world most children around the world cannot send each other messages which can be directly understood.

We live in a queer kind of global village, a village in which most of the people cannot understand the words of most of the other people.

This is the present reality. No thinking person can deny it.

Chapter Two

Esperanto—Then and Now

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This is the second chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village*.

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A Boy's Dream

In the town of Bialystok in the 1860's and the 1870's a boy was growing up who found himself in a city that was like this global village of ours, a city in which most of the people did not really understand each other's languages. At that time Bialystok, which is now situated in northeast Poland, was part of the Russian Empire. The population mainly consisted of members of four ethnic groups, Russians, Germans, Poles and Jews, each speaking their own language. The boy was grieved at the way the members of these groups did not get along. He thought that if they all could speak one neutral language, a language that was not the property of one group but of all mankind, the amount of discord that he saw around him would be diminished.

This boy, Lazar Zamenhof, a Jew who spoke Russian at home and prayed in Hebrew at the synagogue, had a special gift for languages. At school he studied Russian, Latin, Greek, German, French and later English. He also learned Polish and Hebrew. At first he thought that one of the ancient languages, Latin, Greek or Hebrew, should be taught as the international language, but finally he rejected that idea because those languages were very complicated. He wanted a language that ordinary people, people who had no special gift for languages, could learn easily. He was not interested in a language that was so tough that it could be mastered only by a well-to-do elite which could devote a great many years of study to learning it.

Zamenhof began to seriously work on his project when he was fifteen. For more than a decade he continually tested and revised his ideas. Only when he felt he had developed a living language, one in which he could think and write, was he ready to send his proposal for what he called the "International Language" out into the world.

In 1887, when Zamenhof was in his late twenties, he published a modest brochure of some forty pages in Russian in which he put forth his proposal for the new language. Within a short time he brought out Polish, French and German versions of the brochure. English versions followed.

In this small work, which he put out under the pseudonym of "Dr. Esperanto," Zamenhof provided a preface which explained why an easy-to-learn international language was both necessary and possible, a modest grammar of sixteen essential rules, an initial small Russian-International Language vocabulary of about 900 words and a few written examples.

The brochure made its way to people in a large number of countries, and letters soon started coming in, some of them written in the International Language. The Secretary of the American Philosophical Society expressed interest in Zamenhof's project.

The new language was on its way. People called it "Dr. Esperanto's International Language." Eventually they shortened its name to "Esperanto." A year after he put out his first brochure, Zamenhof published a list of the names and addresses of a thousand supporters of the project, supporters who were found mostly in the Russian Empire but also throughout Europe and parts of America, Africa and Asia.

In Nuremberg, Germany, members of the World Language Club put out a magazine in Esperanto. Books came out. The language spread. By 1905 the Esperanto Movement was strong enough to hold its first *Universala Kongreso* (Universal Congress) at Boulogne sur-Mer, a French city on the English Channel. Zamenhof made a speech in Esperanto for the 688 Esperantists who had come from 20 different countries to get together and talk to each other in the new tongue.

These early Esperantists shared a vision, a dream, that dream which was sketched out in the first chapter. Zamenhof realized that their dream would not be realized in a day. It would take a very long time, but he believed that some day the world would see what he called "the final victory of Esperanto."

Now it is ninety years since the first Universal Congress of Esperanto and more than a century since the first little brochure came out. The dream has not been realized. The final victory of Esperanto has not occurred. Many Esperantists still dream of that victory and they work towards it, but somehow it seems as far away as ever.

Throughout its history Esperanto has faced a lot of difficulties. The first of these came when some early advocates of the language decided that it should be changed. When the majority voted to keep Esperanto the way it was, these "dissidents" broke off and created a variant which they called "Ido." The Idists kept changing their new language until, in time, most of the people who supported their variant realized that they could never really master it because it never would stop changing. After a few decades, the number of speakers of Ido decreased and kept decreasing until there were practically none left.

A great opportunity seemed to arise for Esperanto when, in the 1920s, the Iranian delegation to the League of Nations proposed that it be adopted for use in international relations. In the ensuing debate there were vicious attacks on Esperanto. The French representative was particularly vociferous in arguing against this proposal. From his point of view French was the international language. The proposal was defeated.

In Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union Esperantists faced persecution. Hitler had mocked Esperanto in *Mein Kampf*. Stalin called Esperanto "the language of spies." Both Hitler and Stalin had large numbers of Esperantists killed. The whole tragic story of the persecution of the Esperantists has been told by a German scholar, Ulrich Lins, in *La Danæera Lingvo* (The Dangerous Language).

So Esperanto has not won out. And yet it has not faded away, as Ido has. While some experts in the area of languages have dismissed it out of hand without studying it, others such as J. R. R. Tolkien, Mario Pei and Umberto Eco, after taking an honest look at the language, have strongly endorsed its dissemination and wide use. While the Communist dictator Joseph Stalin worked to eradicate Esperanto, another Communist dictator, Marshall Tito, not only advocated its use but spoke it. One of the winners of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics for 1994, Reinhart Selten of Germany, is a fluent Esperantist who has published in the language. Original

literature in Esperanto has developed to the point where the international organization of authors and editors, PEN, now has an Esperanto chapter.

Original works and translations appear continuously. Recently a translation of War and Peace was published in Russia. Original novels, poems and short stories written in Esperanto appear in books and in reviews devoted to literature. A monthly news magazine, *Monato* (Month), presents articles on topics of current interest written by citizens of dozens of different countries.

A Small Global Village

No one in the world knows precisely how many Esperantists there are just as no one knows how many chess players there are. Like chess players or bridge players or stamp collectors, the speakers of Esperanto are scattered throughout the world, and there is no way to take an accurate census of them. Because the number of Esperantists is not known, human nature being what it is, propagandists for Esperanto let their imagination run away with them and come up with fantastic statements such as "there are fifteen million speakers of Esperanto in the world today."

Each year since 1905, except for interruptions due to the world wars, Esperantists from all over the world have gathered together in their Universal Congresses. The largest of these took place in 1987 in Warsaw, Poland where 5946 Esperantists came from nearly sixty countries to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the language. Other congresses in the nineteen eighties and nineties were held in such cities as Brasilia, Vancouver, Beijing, Rotterdam, Havana, Vienna and Seoul. Typically a few thousand Esperantists attend these congresses. Although they speak many dozens of different native languages, the vast majority of those attending speak to each other, entertain each other, joke with each other and commiserate with each other in the language of their small global village. They never have to hunt up an interpreter or put on a pair of uncomfortable headphones in order to understand what someone else is saying. Newcomers to the language carry a dictionary with them so they can look up the occasional word that they might need and do not know.

There are precise numbers that tell us how many Esperantists engage in particular activities. We know that in most years more than 2000 of them gather for their Universal Congresses. We know that every day in the year scheduled meetings are taking place among Esperantists. We know that the 1994 *Jarlibro de la Universala Esperanto-Asocio* (Yearbook of the Universal Esperanto Association) lists 2182 delegates who live in hundreds of cities in 86 different countries, countries which include not only the United States, China, Japan, Russia, Brazil and Germany, but also Cameroon, Costa Rica, Zaire, Benin and Nepal. These delegates have taken on the responsibility to assist foreign Esperantists who run into some difficulty in their country. The delegates are also available to answer written requests in Esperanto about their particular areas of special interest and expert knowledge. The index listing these areas covers ten pages in the yearbook. The areas range from *abelbredado* (beekeeping) to *zoologio* (zoology). The number of fluent Esperantists is some multiple of the 5946 who attended the 1987 Universal Congress of Esperanto. It is some multiple of the 2182 delegates listed in the current yearbook. Unfortunately no one knows what that multiple is.

Every year the *Tutmonda Esperantista Junulara Organizo* (World Youth Esperanto Organization) puts out a book called *La Pasporto Servo* (The Passport Service) which lists about 900 Esperantists in about 75 countries who have agreed to host fellow Esperantists for a few days, either without any charge at all or for a very nominal fee. Because of this network, fluent Esperantists of all ages can travel around the world very inexpensively staying with hosts in

such cities as Pretoria, Paris, San Francisco, Montreal, Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, Munich, Seoul, Moscow, Zurich, Helsinki, Lima, Dakar and Kalamazoo.

Although Esperanto books come out all the time, they generally sell in very small numbers, perhaps a few hundred a year. If a book sells a thousand copies, people start to get excited. Unfortunately a large portion of the world's population of Esperantists live in countries where their income is so low that buying a postage stamp for foreign correspondence is a major expense. For such people buying an Esperanto book from another country is simply beyond their means.

Esperanto magazines, like the fine review, *Literatura Foiro* (Literary Fair) and the interesting news magazine *Monato* have between one and two thousand subscribers each.

If I were to make a guess—and it is no more than one guess among many that could be made—I would estimate that there are about a hundred thousand Esperantists who know the language thoroughly, another two hundred thousand who have a good working knowledge of the language and can speak it with some proficiency and another million or so people who can correspond in the language very effectively but speak it haltingly at best. There may very well be ten or fifteen million people in the world who have studied a little bit of Esperanto and who could be said to have a smattering of the language. These, of course, do not know enough of the language to use it in any practical way. They correspond to the tens of millions of Americans who have studied some foreign language in school but who are completely incapable of reading, writing or speaking in that language.

Compared to the dreams of Zamenhof the present number of Esperantists, whatever it might be, is very small. However, that Esperantists have created an international linguistic community whose numbers equal the population of a small country is an unprecedented achievement. These Esperantists learned their new language, often on their own, and use it to maintain contacts with their fellows throughout the world. The members of this small world village of Esperantists belong to a great many different religions, and some of them have no religion. Catholic members of this world village from time to time celebrate mass in Esperanto. Protestant church services are held regularly at a church in London. The members of this world village belong to a wide variety of professions, and, as we have seen, the list of their areas of expert knowledge is very long. They include professors of linguistics, college presidents, heads of state, railway employees, businessmen, lawyers, composers, authors and so on. They include sedentary people and athletes, scholars and farmers, chess players and go-players, vegetarians and nudists, preschoolers and college students, acupuncturists and librarians, honest people and con artists. In short they span a great range of human achievement and of human interests. By the nature of their interest in Esperanto, most of them tend to be idealistic and they are, of course, 100% bilingual. In fact many of them know more than two languages.

Chapter Three

The Ultimate Authority in Esperanto

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This is the third chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village*.

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In his first brochure Zamenhof laid out the structure of Esperanto. He wrote out the sixteen basic grammatical rules and created a basic vocabulary of about 900 words. He explained the essential nature of the language and gave examples of how it worked. But he did not create the entire language, and he did not pretend to. That would be a job for a community of users.

In the first years of Esperanto some people, who were scattered all over the world, started to use it. They wrote letters and traveled to other countries so they could communicate in the new language. They wrote articles, essays, stories, poems and even novels, and they translated different kinds of works into the new language.

Zamenhof had adapted his original small vocabulary mostly from the Romance and Germanic languages. Following this example, the early Esperantists introduced new words as needed from these sources. Zamenhof himself was one of these very active early Esperantists. He produced Esperanto versions of the Jewish Bible and works of such authors as Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe, Schiller and Hans Christian Andersen.

From the very beginning Zamenhof disclaimed any special authority over Esperanto. He refused to copyright the language, saying that it was the common property of all of those who chose to use it. Early on, many individuals suggested changes which they considered to be improvements in the language. Zamenhof neither rejected nor endorsed these suggestions. Instead he put them to a vote of the Esperanto community. Zamenhof himself abstained from voting, and he did not vote any of the proxies which many people sent to him. The Esperanto community voted down the changes. Zamenhof accepted their decision because they, he felt, composed the highest authority. Zamenhof was the author of Esperanto but the community of users decided what the language was to be.

Zamenhof wrote a book called *La Fundamento de Esperanto* (The Foundation of Esperanto). This book contained an introduction and a large number of examples in Esperanto. It also gave, in five national languages, Russian, Polish, French, German and English, the sixteen basic rules of the grammar and definitions for a few thousand Esperanto words.

Zamenhof proposed to the first Universal Congress that it adopt this book as the unchangeable foundation of Esperanto. The Congress voted to accept his proposal.

After that, neither Zamenhof nor anyone else had the right to do away with the basic grammar or vocabulary or usage patterns of the language as they were found in the *Fundamento*. The

author of Esperanto did not want this essential core of the language to be constantly fiddled with. He did not want people to "improve the language to death" as the Idists later did with their language.

The sixteen basic grammatical rules could not be changed. The usages in the examples could not be done away with. The words in the vocabulary could not be erased from the language. The community could introduce new words as needed, including synonyms for existing words, and it could develop new usages, but these would exist side-by-side along with those in the Foundation of Esperanto.

New words are being introduced into Esperanto all the time, just as they are in all other living languages. Esperanto has words for "computer" and "laser" and "compact disk" and "atomic bomb" just like any other language. Just as with other languages the ordinary users of the language decide which new terms will be adopted. Decisions are always made by common usage. As with English and with other languages, it is the community of users that decides questions of usage and vocabulary. In accordance with the vote taken by the early Esperantists, they do this within the framework that Zamenhof provided.

Chapter Four

Spelling Esperanto

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This is the fourth chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village.

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One of the pleasures of learning Esperanto is learning how to spell in the language. Like a number of other languages, Esperanto is perfectly phonetic. This is one of the things that makes Esperanto so much easier to learn than languages such as Chinese, Japanese, French and English.

Learning How to Write in Chinese and Japanese

Imagine if it were decided that everyone in the world would have to learn as the main international language that language which was spoken by more people than any other. Everyone would have to learn Mandarin Chinese, a language which has twice as many speakers as English according to the World Almanac. Everyone would have to learn how to recognize and to draw a separate character, called an ideogram or an ideograph, for thousands of individual words. This would take many years of study.

Because of the use of ideograms, Chinese does have one significant advantage over languages which use an alphabet. Because most words are represented by just one character and not by a bunch of letters, educated readers can read Chinese more rapidly than their counterparts can read English, French, Arabic or Esperanto. In the languages that use alphabets a word may require five or ten different characters, letters, to represent it, and not just one or two.

It makes good sense for the Chinese to keep their system of ideograms because of this advantage. However, the immense difficulty of learning thousands of these ideograms makes it impractical to consider Chinese for use as an easy-to-learn international language.

Learning How to Spell in French

It is not at all easy to learn how to spell in French. There are good historical reasons for this. One is that there are more sounds in French than there are letters in the Latin alphabet which French, like English, uses. Another reason is that French spelling was essentially fixed a long time ago but French pronunciation kept changing. Because the French have kept the spelling forms that were used hundreds of years ago, they can read the old texts easily. This is a big advantage. However, because present day French spelling does not match present day French pronunciation, learning correct French spelling can be very difficult. This is a disadvantage.

French is such a difficult language to spell that French dictionaries not only have to give the regular spelling of each word but they also have to present the pronunciation of each word using a second alphabet, a phonetic alphabet which consists of forty different symbols, one for each of the sounds of the language. The 26 letters of the modern Latin alphabet have to represent 40 different French sounds. Accent marks over the vowels help somewhat, but there can still be different ways of spelling the same vowel sound. (For instance, the words O, au, aux and eau are all pronounced alike.)

In French sometimes two or more letters are required to write down a single sound. It is not difficult to find words which have twice as many letters as they have sounds. *Maintenant*, which means "now," has ten letters which represent five sounds. *Enceinte*, which means "pregnant" or "enclosed," has eight letters which represent just four sounds.

Most final consonants are only pronounced if the following word begins with a vowel or a certain kind of an "h." The common verb ending -ent is not pronounced at all. The following three forms of the French verb that means "to talk" or "to speak" are all pronounced the same way:

je parle	=	I am speaking
tu parles	=	you (familiar) are speaking
ils parles	=	they (masculine) are speaking

French is such a challenging language to spell, even for native speakers of the language, that French educators have devised a special kind of classroom exercise called a dictée or dictation which they use a lot. In this exercise the teacher reads a passage aloud, clearly and slowly, and the students write down what they hear. The student tries to write out the passage making as few mistakes as possible. Some of these exercises are fiendishly difficult.

For a few centuries, up until the twentieth century, French was the most commonly used international language. French achieved this status due to the prestige of French culture and the influence of the French state. French did not achieve this status because it is an easy language to spell.

Learning How to spell in English

English spelling is even more difficult than French spelling. There are a number of reasons why it is so difficult. One reason is that English has even more sounds than French but only twenty-six letters with which to spell those sounds. Unlike French, English does not take advantage of accent marks over vowels to help distinguish between different sounds. Another reason is that English words come from a vast number of sources, from different dialects of English and from languages all over the world. Various foreign pronunciations are kept even when they do not accord with earlier English forms of spelling. Thus, for example, the "p" in the English term "coup de grace" is silent as it is in the original French.

English spelling is so difficult that every year in the United States special contests are held among schoolchildren to see which student can last the longest, spelling words without making a mistake. These spelling bees can be very challenging competitions. Champions are selected at every level, from the classroom level or school level up to the national level. The National Champion gets his or her picture in the paper and wins a college scholarship.

English spelling is so difficult that many college graduates never master it. The number of native speakers of English who have to check the correctness of their spelling includes

professional people and holders of advanced degrees. This is not because these people are stupid. It is because the English system of spelling, for good historical reasons, is grossly illogical.

When people all around the world decide to study English for use as an international language, they take on this tremendous burden of illogical spelling. It must be particularly galling for people whose native tongues are spelled phonetically to have to confront and try to master this illogical system. They have to devote hundreds of hours of hard work to do so. They do not spend all of this time at once. However, every time they learn a new word and have to check how it is spelled, they spend a little bit of this time. A minute here and a minute there add up. If a student has learned how to correctly spell, say, 5000 English words, that student has spent hundreds of hours learning how to spell correctly in English.

As with French, the makers of English dictionaries not only give the correct spelling (or, in some cases, correct spellings) of each word but they also represent the sound of each word by utilizing a system of specially marked letters. The American Heritage Dictionary lists the different ways of spelling each of these sounds in Standard American English. (Standard British English is pronounced somewhat differently.) According to this highly reputable dictionary there are often a great many thirteen different ways of spelling a single sound in English.

The sound of o as in go is spelled in these twelve additional ways:

1. au as in mauve
2. eo as in yeoman
3. ew as in sew
4. oa as in roam
5. oe as in foe
6. oh as in oh
7. oo as in brooch
8. ou as in shoulder
9. ow as in flow
10. eau as in bureau
11. ough as in borough
12. owe as in owe

Some of these are rare; others, more common. Someone learning how to spell English has to learn how to keep these thirteen ways of spelling a single sound apart. What makes it more difficult is that many of these ways of spelling the sound of o as in go are also used to spell other sounds:

The letters ew spell the o-sound in sew but an oo-sound in flew.

The letters ow spell the o-sound in flow but an ow-sound in cow.

The letters ough spell the o-sound in borough but an uff-sound in rough

And so on. And so on. And so on.

The o as in go example is only the most complex case. There are a great many other sounds in English which are spelled in multiple ways.

Let us consider a consonant sound that is spelled in different ways.

The sound of s as in say also appears as:

1. ss as in mess
2. c as in cell
3. ce as in piece
4. ps as in psychoanalysis
5. sc as in science
6. sch as in schism
7. sth as in isthmus

As a final example let us take the sound of ch in church which is also spelled in these ways:

1. c as in cello
2. cz as in czar
3. tch as in bitch
4. ti as in question
5. t as in adventure

Many pages could be filled with similar examples.

Here are some pairs of words in which the last part of each word is spelled the same but pronounced differently:

alive / give
 break / streak
 raid / said
 dour / four
 ache / mustache

English has a lot of letters which are written but not pronounced such as:

the b	in	doubt
the g	in	gnaw
the k	in	know
the gh	in	though
the l	in	walk
the s	in	island

For each new word, the foreign student must make a special effort to learn how that particular word is spelled. When he comes across the word fish, for example, he has to learn which of the five ways of spelling the f sound is used, which of the ten ways of spelling the i sound is used and which of the twelve ways of spelling the sh sound is used.

Of course, the more the student studies English, the more of a feeling he will develop for English spelling patterns. He will realize that the gh way of spelling the f sound never occurs at the beginning of a word. Nevertheless, irregularities in spelling will always betray him. They are strewn throughout the entire language like thousands of little traps. Facing these irregularities, logic and intelligence are helpless.

In order to adopt English for more efficient use as an international auxiliary language it would make sense to spell the language phonetically. That would save each foreign student of the language many hundreds of hours of valuable learning time. However to do so would require an alphabet of more than forty letters. Most native speakers of English would greet such a proposal with disdain or with incredulity. When people have spent their whole lives getting used to a system that they use every day, they do not want to change it, no matter how much it

might help other people if they did so. (Esperantists, of course, would be just as resistant to changes in their language.)

If a phonetic system for spelling English were adopted universally, it too would have to vary for each one of the many different kinds of English that are spoken. People pronounce the language quite differently in different places. Just think of the forms of the language that are commonly used in Chicago, Boston, Mississippi, Yorkshire, Scotland, London, Bombay, Nigeria and Jamaica, to say nothing of Papua New Guinea.

The standard English system of spelling is very advantageous in one way. English is a national (or state) language in many different countries which were once part of the British Empire, countries as different as Jamaica, England, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ghana and South Africa. Even though the pronunciation may vary among all of these countries and more, the written language is essentially similar. This makes it easy for people in one of these countries to read materials written by people in another of these countries even though some individuals from the two areas might have difficulty understanding each other's pronunciation.

The many millions of non-native speakers of English who study the tongue as an international auxiliary language have to constantly concern themselves with the spelling of words. After hundreds of hours of work none of them will have fully mastered the English spelling system. When they see a new word in print they will not automatically know how to pronounce it. All they will be able to do is make a guess or look for their dictionary or utilize their multi-media computer's pronouncing dictionary.

The Ease of Learning to Spell in Esperanto

Compared to learning how to spell in English or in French, learning to spell in Esperanto is a snap. Americans who have mastered the materials of a simple, thirty hour introductory course in Esperanto will be able to spell much better in Esperanto than in their native language. A foreign student of English could study spelling for a thousand hours and still would not be able to spell as a beginner can in Esperanto after a short introductory course. This is because spelling in Esperanto is phonetic. (Esperanto is not at all unique in this. Many other languages are spelled phonetically including Finnish and Swahili.)

Each Esperanto letter represents just one sound. Each Esperanto sound is represented by just one letter. An international language is to be learned by people all over the world. If one of the criteria for selecting a language for international use is that it should be easy to spell, then Esperanto meets that criterion.

New Esperantists can correctly spell words that they hear for the first time and they can correctly pronounce words that they see for the first time.

The situation regarding Esperanto can be summed up with this single, simple statement:

There is one way of spelling each of the 28 different sounds.

Chapter Five

Pronouncing Esperanto

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This is the fifth chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village.

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The Esperanto Alphabet

Esperanto's twenty-eight sounds are each represented by one letter. Just as the Italian alphabet does without five letters which the English alphabet includes (j, k, w, x and y), so the Esperanto alphabet does without four letters that the English alphabet has. These letters which are found in English but not in Esperanto are q, x, w and y.

Esperanto includes six special letters which English does not have. Unfortunately they cannot be shown using the usual font in the Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) in which standard web pages such as this one are written. They include five consonants with a circumflex accent (^) over them. HTML does permit the circumflex accents to be placed over the vowels a, e, i, o and u:

Â Ê Î Ô Û â ê î ô û.

These vowels are used in French but not in English and not in Esperanto. However, seeing them might help you to imagine what the Esperanto consonants with the circumflex accents look like. I will place the accent marks after the consonants here but I will ask you to imagine that they are smaller and on top of the consonants. These additional consonants which English does not have are ĉ, ĝ, ĥ, ĵ and ŝ. Additionally Esperanto has a semi-vowel that has its own special accent mark that looks like a shallow half moon. This is called a "hoketo" (little hook) in Esperanto. In this HTML version of Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village I will use ú to stand for the u with the accent mark.

To see what the Esperanto characters really look like you can go to charts of the Esperanto alphabet in the excellent online Esperanto grammar PMEG (Plena Manlibro de Esperanta Gramatiko) by Bertilo Wennergren:

Esperanto Characters with Accent Marks

The accented letters (ĉ, ĝ, ĥ, ĵ, ŝ and ú) are regarded as being different letters than c, g, h, j, s and u just as the Spanish "ñ" is regarded as being a different letter than the Spanish "n".

Five Easy Vowels

There are just five vowel sounds in Esperanto. They are represented by the five vowels, a, e, i, o and u. These are pure vowels, without any y sound or w sound at the end of them. They can be remembered easily by memorizing the following sentence as it would be pronounced by speakers of Standard American English:

Ah, men fear cold tombs!

Pronounce the vowels as follows:

a	as in ah
e	as in men
i	as in fear
o	as in cold
u	as in tombs

Esperanto forms diphthongs by adding a j to a vowel. The j is pronounced like j in "hallilujah", that is, like the English letter y. Here are some examples:

oj is pronounced like the English oy in boy

aj is pronounced like the English y in my or like the English igh in sigh.

Esperanto also forms diphthongs by adding ú to a vowel. The ú is pronounced like the English u in guava. In other words, it is pronounced like the English w. Here is an example:

aú is pronounced like the English ow in cow or like the English ough in bough.

That covers the vowel sounds in Esperanto, except for a few more diphthongs which can be easily pronounced by putting their two component sounds together. One of these, eú, does not exist in English and must be practiced by speakers of English, just as speakers of French who are learning English have to practice the English sounds that do not occur in their language. (A way to learn how to pronounce eú is to say "Ed" but replace the d-sound with a w-sound.)

The Not-so-easy Vowels of English

The Esperanto vowels are spaced nicely apart. Be aware of your mouth, your tongue, your lips when you pronounce the Esperanto "a-e-i-o-u." Notice that there is a lot of movement between each vowel sound. Now do the same with the English vowels in "bat-bet-bit-but." Notice how much more subtle these movements are. This, of course, makes no difference when it comes to children learning English as their native tongue. Children pick up any sound and imitate it exactly. This is why Chinese children have no trouble learning how to pronounce Chinese, and American children have no trouble learning how to pronounce English. However, it is quite a different matter when it comes to American teen-agers or adults learning how to pronounce Chinese or Chinese teen-agers or adults learning how to pronounce English. Here subtle differences are hard to detect, hard to reproduce and hard to recognize. This is one of the reasons why Americans might have some difficulty understanding the English of many Orientals. This is one of the reasons why many foreign students of English have trouble pronouncing English.

The Esperanto Consonants

Most Esperanto consonants are pronounced as they are in English. This includes these letters:

b as in baby

d as in dog

f as in fill

k as in kid

m as in might

n as in now

p as in porcupine

t as in take

v as in Victor

z as in zebra

For speakers of Standard American English there is a fine point regarding the sound of l which does not generally cause any real problem if ignored.

In Standard American English there are actually two l-sounds although most speakers of this version of English are not aware of it. If you are a speaker of Standard American and you pay attention to the tip of your tongue when you pronounce "lip" and "yellow" you will find that the tip of your tongue is farther forward when you pronounce the l of "lip" than when you pronounce the l of "yellow." Some authorities suggest that the l-sound in order to be perfectly authentic should always be pronounced like the l in "lip."

The consonants that have to be learned by speakers of English are as follows:

c is always pronounced like ts in cats, even when it comes at the beginning of a word. (However it is always one sound without any hint of a pause between the t and the s.)

ĉ is always pronounced like ch in chair

g is always pronounced like g in great (never like g in George)

ĝ is always pronounced like g in George (never like g in great)

h is always pronounced like h in have

ĥ is always pronounced like the Scots ch in loch (this is a very rare sound)

j is always pronounced like y in yesterday

ĵ is always pronounced like s in pleasure (or z in azure)

s is always pronounced like s in still

ŝ is always pronounced like s in sure (or sh in should)

The sound of r is pronounced in different ways. The way chosen usually depends on the linguistic background of the speaker. Most authorities claim that the one correct way of pronouncing the r-sound is to pronounce it with the tip of the tongue as speakers of Spanish or Serbo-Croatian do. Other authorities claim that it can also be pronounced like the Parisian or German r by vibrating the uvula (that little fleshy thing that hangs down at the back of your mouth) and some authorities claim that it can be pronounced as it is in Standard American.

The r-sound is a problematic and difficult sound for many millions of people. The Chinese and Japanese have a great deal of difficulty pronouncing r. Once when I was speaking with a visiting Chinese Esperantist I could not understand his pronunciation of poŝmarkoj which means "postage stamps" because he entirely omitted the r-sound. Because of the difficulty that a large percentage of the human race has with the r-sound, Johann Martin Schleyer, who developed the earlier planned language of Volapük, left this sound out of his language.

For Americans the best practical advice is probably this: Pronounce the r as the Spanish do with the tip of the tongue if you can. Second best is to pronounce it with the uvula as the Parisians and the Germans do. Third best is to pronounce it as it is in Standard American English. However, make certain that you always pronounce it clearly or else you will run a danger of not being understood. If you pronounce it in the American style you will be speaking with a distinct American accent.

I have difficulty pronouncing the r with the tip of the tongue so I pronounce it in the Parisian or German style. In 1989 I attended the five day annual convention of the Esperanto League for North America in Chicago. We spoke only Esperanto there. I was asked what country I originally came from. I answered that I was a native-born American. Some people looked surprised at that. I suspect that my guttural r-sound gave them the impression that I came from some other country.

It should be noted that when Orientals learn English they have the same difficulty with the r-sound as they have when they learn Esperanto.

Because the ĥ-sound created a lot of trouble for speakers who did not have that sound in their native language, it has been replaced, wherever possible, by the k-sound. There are very few common words with this sound that remain in the language.

A difficulty for English speakers is the combination sc which occurs in words such as scienco (science). The sound for c (or something very similar to it) is found in English but not at the beginning of a word except for the ts in "tse-tse fly." Many English speaking students of Esperanto incorrectly pronounce scienco as though it were written "sienco" or "cienco". I think that they are usually understood anyway.

The level of difficulty of pronouncing sounds in Esperanto or in any other newly learned language will vary according to the presence or absence of those sounds in the student's native language. Finns who study languages such as English or Esperanto have a lot of trouble with consonants because several consonants in these languages simply do not exist in Finnish. A Russian friend of mine who immigrated to the United States once remarked that her mouth felt as though it were filled with cotton during her first year of pronouncing the strange sounds of English.

If one of the criteria for selecting a language for international use is that its sounds should be easy to pronounce for everyone, then it will be very difficult to find such a language. Esperanto, of course, does not fully meet that requirement, but then only a language with very few sounds would.

The Ease of Placing the Tonic Accent in Esperanto

In Esperanto, as in English, certain syllables receive a special stress. This stress is called the tonic accent. It is made by slightly raising the pitch of the syllable. In the English word "elephant" the stress is placed on the first syllable. In the English word "emotion" the stress is placed on the second syllable.

In Esperanto the stress always comes on the next-to-the-last syllable. The student of this language learns that a syllable is a group of letters which contains a vowel and that the stress always comes on the syllable which contains the next to the last vowel. After a few minutes of practice, the student of Esperanto has mastered this feature of the language. Here are some examples:

ami	(to love), a two syllable word
malami	(to hate), a three syllable word
elefanto	(an elephant), a four syllable word
televidilo	(a television set), a five syllable word

Esperanto is not unique in placing the stress on the next-to-the-last syllable. This feature is found in other languages, such as Welsh and Swahili.

The Difficulty in Figuring Out Where to Place the Tonic Accent in English

In English the tonic accent can come practically anywhere in a word. This is no problem for native speakers. As children they easily pick up the correct placement of the tonic accent. However, for foreign students of English, learning the placement of the tonic accent is another one of those tasks that comes up each time new words are learned. That little task has to be taken care of hundreds or thousands of times, depending on how many polysyllabic words are learned.

Here are a few examples of the placement of the main tonic accent in English. (Many English words also have a lesser stress as well. I have only indicated the main stress in these words.)

1. In two syllable words the accent falls on the first syllable in some words and on the second syllable in others:

hopeful, disdain, carton, cartoon

2. In three syllable words the accent falls on the first syllable in some words, on the second syllable in some words and on the third syllable in some words:

carnival, carnation, disunite

3. In different four syllable words the primary accent can be found placed on the first, second, or third syllable:

personable, stenographer, motivation

4. In longer words the main stress can be found in a variety of positions:

justification	(on the fourth of five syllables)
incompatibility	(on the fifth of seven syllables)
systematically	(on the third of six syllables)
telecommunication	(on sixth of seven syllables)

Errors in placing the stress are quite common among non-native speakers of English. Sometimes this kind of variance from standard pronunciation is just one of a large number of variances that together make the speaker very hard to understand.

I was once speaking with a Ugandan who was working on a master's degree in economics at the University of Michigan. He said that a problem in his country was--and here I could not figure out what the next words were. He repeated them. When I still did not understand, he explained that people were coming over the border and stealing cows, just like in our western movies. He had pronounced the words "cattle rustling" as "cattle rustling" and because of the misplaced stress his words were unintelligible to me. He was a highly intelligent person and very successful in his advanced studies in economics. (He eventually earned a PhD in international economics.) He spoke English well. However, all of these little details of English which cannot be reduced to invariable, regular rules will, from time to time, impede his ability to communicate in his international language.

This does not mean that there is anything wrong with the English system of placing stress in an irregular way. As a matter of fact it is one of the features of the language that makes possible the wealth of rhythms in English poetry and prose. However it does create problems for the foreign student who wants to learn a language for occasional use as an auxiliary language, problems which Esperanto completely avoids.

Chapter Six

Ambiguity or Understanding

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This is the sixth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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Students of English have to learn how to tell what part of speech a particular word is from the context in which the word is found. The word "run" is sometimes a noun as in a run of bad luck and sometimes a verb as in candidates who run for high office. The word "green" is sometimes a noun as in green is my favorite color and sometimes an adjective as in green grass. The word "fast" is sometimes an adjective as in a fast race and sometimes an adverb as in he is fast asleep.

Users of English can usually distinguish the parts of speech that a word takes by paying attention to word order. Adjectives normally precede the nouns they modify and subject nouns normally precede their verbs. Native speakers pick up this skill naturally as they learn to talk when they are very little children long before they know what "noun" or "verb" or "adjective" means. Foreign students have to learn the word order. Normally this is not an onerous task.

However, there are cases where this ambiguity regarding the part of speech that a word takes misleads users of English, even native speakers of English.

One example of this is given by Claude Piron who noticed that some delegates to a meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization did not understand what was meant by the English name for the organization. Most of them understood the English phrase to mean "an international organization that concerns itself with civil aviation" whereas in fact it means "an organization that concerns itself with international civil aviation." (Claude Piron, *Le défi des langues*, pp. 87-88.) There is a big difference between the two. The first kind of organization would concern itself with civil aviation generally (including civil aviation which takes place inside of a country) whereas the second kind of organization only concerns itself with civil aviation that take place across international borders.

Here is a somewhat similar example: If someone is writing about the Second World War and mentions "a Japanese prisoner of war camp" the reader has to know from the context whether this was a camp where Japanese were held as prisoners or a camp where the Japanese held their prisoners.

A whimsical but highly instructive example comes from the field of Artificial Intelligence. One of the problems of programming computers to understand a language is to get the computer to understand when a word functions as a noun, a verb, an adjective or some other part of

speech. Computers, and even native speakers of English, are taken aback by these two sentences:

Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.

If we analyze these sentences according to the parts of speech of the different words we find that although at first glance, they are of the same form in fact they could hardly be more different.

Time flies like an arrow.
(noun, subject)
(intransitive verb, present tense)
(conjunction)
(indefinite article)
(noun, subject)

Fruit flies like a banana.
(adjective)
(noun, subject)
(transitive verb, present tense)
(indefinite article)
(noun, direct object)

In the first sentence flies is a verb, in the second, a noun. In the first sentence like is a conjunction, in the second a verb. In the first sentence the final word, a noun, is a subject of an implied verb (flies), in the second sentence the final word, a noun, is the direct object of like.

Even native speakers of English when they write quickly may be unaware that the meaning that they intended and the meaning that the reader intuits may be ridiculously different. Richard Lederer is a tireless collector of these kinds of phrases. Here are some examples he presents in *Anguished English* of headlines that have appeared in English language newspapers. The unintended humor depends on the reader's not correctly identifying the part of speech which a word takes. (Native speakers of English will need no explanation of the humor of these examples but explanations will be provided for those who read this book who learned English as a foreign language. My own experience with French tells me that this kind of help will be welcome to such readers.) First here are three examples out of more than thirty inadvertently comical headlines which Lederer presents:

1. BRITISH LEFT WAFFLES ON FALKLAND ISLANDS

2. EYE DROPS OFF SHELF

3. TEACHER STRIKES IDLE KIDS

1. The first example might be read to mean either

(incorrect) that the British left behind them waffles (crisp battercakes) on the Falkland Islands.

or

(correct) that the left wingers in Britain were waffling (being evasive) about their position on the issue of the Falkland Islands, which had been taken over by Argentina

The humor comes from reading "British" as a noun instead of an adjective, "left" as a verb instead of as a noun and "waffles" as a direct object noun instead of as a verb.

2. The second examples might be read to mean either

(incorrect) that an eye fell from a shelf.

or

(correct) that bottles of drops for the eyes have been removed from the shelves of stores (perhaps because they were contaminated)

The humor comes from reading "eye" as a subject noun instead of as an adjective and "drops" as a verb instead of as a subject noun.

3. The third example might be read to mean either

(incorrect) a teacher hit children who were idle.

or

(correct) labor stoppages by teacher make their students idle because they can't go to school

The humor comes from reading "teacher" as a subject noun instead of as an adjective, "strikes" as a verb instead of a subject noun and "idle" as an adjective instead of as a verb.

These examples are likely to startle native speakers which is why Lederer put them in his book. However, native speakers will quickly figure out what was intended. Foreign speakers, especially those who have learned English for occasional use as an international language, may be subject to a much deeper confusion.

Students of Esperanto do not run into these difficulties because most of the words of the language come with little tags, endings, which identify their part of speech and their function:

The ending -o identifies a word as a noun.

The ending -a identifies a word as an adjective.

The ending -j identifies a word as in the plural.

The ending -n identifies a word as a direct object.

The ending -e identifies a word as an adverb.

In addition to these there are six simple verb endings which indicate that a word is a verb and tells the tense or mood of the verb:

The ending -i identifies a word as a verb in the infinitive.

The ending -as identifies a word as a verb in the present tense.

The ending -as identifies a word as a verb in the past tense.

The ending -os identifies a word as a verb in the future tense.

The ending –u identifies a word as a verb in the imperative mood.

The ending –us identifies a word as a verb in the conditional mood.

If we were to translate the third headline into Esperanto we would come up with:

INSTRUISTAJ STRIKOJ SENOKUPIGAS INFANOJN.

The –aj ending for "instruistoj" shows that this word is an adjective in the plural, the –oj ending for "strikoj" shows that this word is a noun in the plural, the –as ending for "senokupigas" shows that this word is a verb in the present tense and the –ojn ending for "infanojn" shows that this word is a plural noun used as a direct object. These endings get rid of the ambiguity that is inherent in the English headline.

Of course it is wonderful to laugh and the enjoyment created by this ambiguity for native speakers who spend hundreds of thousands of hours practicing their language far outweighs the temporary confusion caused by the fact that English words can sometimes be easily mistaken in regard to their part of speech. However, for the foreign student who can never have hundreds of thousands of hours of practice with English but normally only one or two per cent of the amount of practice of a native speaker, this ambiguity can create serious confusion, something that ought not to be inherent in a language that is used from time to time as an interlanguage.

One of the wonderful features of English is its conciseness. If you look at information on a package that is given in English and French or English and Spanish you will notice that the information in English takes up much less space. This conciseness is a great virtue for native speakers who have thoroughly mastered their language. For foreign students of an international language it comes at too great a cost: ambiguity, confusion, misunderstanding.

Chapter Seven

Where English Is an Easy Language Too

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This is the seventh chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village by Sylvan Zaft.

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National languages are often difficult in some ways but easy in others. Chinese is a very difficult language to learn how to read and write but, on the other hand, it has no irregular verbs. This makes it very easy in that respect. When Chinese start studying English they are surprised to discover the illogical and inconsistent ways in which English verbs are constructed. If you say, "I laugh / I laughed" and "I learn / I learned," why can't you say, "I teach / I taught" and "I run / I runned"? The teacher has to tell them, "No, it doesn't make any sense. However, that's the way it is. That is the way the language developed, and that is the way you have to learn it even if it doesn't make sense to you."

Yet, compared with the grammar of other foreign languages which are commonly studied in America and Europe, the grammar of English is relatively simple. In fact it was this relative simplicity of English grammar which inspired the sixteen-year old Zamenhof to create an even simpler grammar for the language he was planning.

Freedom from Genders

Swahili is a relatively simple language. It is phonetic. It does not have irregular verbs. However, nouns are distributed throughout six genders. (The word "gender" simply means a certain grammatical class of a noun. In grammar it can but does not have to refer to sex. It can refer to dangerous things or flat things or animals or any other kinds of thing.) Swahili is not the champion language in regard to the number of genders. The Kivunjo language of Tanzania which, like Swahili, belongs to the Bantu family of languages, has sixteen genders (Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p.127).

When people study Swahili or Kivunjo, every time they learn a noun, they have to memorize that noun's gender. Every time students of Swahili want to put a noun in the plural, they have to recall which of the six genders it belongs to, recall the method which that gender utilizes to form the plural, and apply that particular method and not one of the others. In order to speak Swahili correctly and fluently this knowledge must come not after taking a few seconds to think about it but instantaneously, reflexively.

Someone speaking German has to do the same thing, but with three genders. Someone speaking Spanish or French has to do the same thing, but with two genders.

Even in the case of a language with two genders, learning the gender of each noun and applying it correctly is a very complex process. In French (or Spanish or German or Latin or many other languages as well) every time you learn a new noun, you have to learn its gender. When you want to use the word "the" or "a" in front of it, you have to choose the form of "the" or "a" that corresponds to the gender of that particular noun. "A door", which is feminine, is "une porte" but "a wall", which is masculine, is "un mur." "The door" is "la porte" but "the wall" is "le mur."

You cannot depend on logic to tell if a French noun is masculine or feminine. "A man" (un homme) is masculine and "a woman" (une femme) is feminine. However, "a beard" is feminine and "breasts" is masculine. You have to take a little bit of time to learn the gender of each of the thousand or thousands of nouns you have to know to speak the language. This adds up to more hours of work. And even you learn the gender of a great many nouns, if you do not have occasion to use certain nouns for a long period of time, you may find that you have forgotten what you once knew.

If you use an adjective to go along with the noun, you have to remember if that adjective has just (a) one form that goes with both masculine and feminine nouns or (b) a masculine form that goes along with masculine nouns and a feminine form that goes along with feminine nouns. The French word for "green" has two forms, vert that goes along with masculine nouns and verte that goes along with feminine nouns, but the French word for "red" has just one form, rouge, which goes with both masculine and feminine nouns.

It is amusing to note that the French adjectives that mean "masculine" and "feminine" each have two forms, one that goes along with masculine nouns and one that goes along with feminine nouns. However, the oddities involving gender in French get weirder than this. There are a few French nouns which are masculine in the singular but feminine in the plural, and there is one, gens (people), which has only a plural form but which is sometimes masculine, and sometimes feminine, according to a special set of rules.

If an adjective follows gens, the adjective (and consequently, gens) is masculine, but if the adjective comes in front of gens, then the adjective (and, consequently, gens) is feminine unless that adjective happens to end with a silent e in its masculine form, in which case gens once again is masculine.

Gens is an extreme case but it illustrates the utter lack of logic when it comes to the gender classification of the overwhelming majority of French nouns and adjectives.

Compare this with English. There are no genders to learn. Every English noun takes the definite article "the" without exception. It takes the indefinite article "a" (or "an" in front of a vowel sound). Adjectives come in one form. All you have to learn is the adjective. You do not have to learn a different form for use with certain nouns and another form for use with other nouns.

Zamenhof used a very simple system in Esperanto. He provided just one form for the definite article. La and only la means "the." There is no indefinite article, no counterpart to the English words "a" and "an." (One function of these little words is to show that the following word is a noun. Esperanto uses the o-ending that nouns take to do that job.) Only a language like Russian is simpler when it comes to the article. Russian gets along without articles just as Chinese gets along without a mandatory plural form for nouns.

Esperanto adjectives do not change according to gender because, as in English, Esperanto nouns and adjectives do not come in different genders.

The learning burden when it comes to French genders amounts to hundreds of hours of extra work. The problem of genders in French provides a great many opportunities for making mistakes, opportunities for error which simply do not exist in either English or Esperanto.

The Simplicity of the Verbs

Another thing that struck Zamenhof about English was the relative simplicity of the verbs. The linguist Daniel Pinker points out that "in modern Italian and Spanish every verb has about fifty forms; in classical Greek, three hundred and fifty; in Turkish, two million!" (Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, p.127.)

Compared with these languages, learning the English verb is a cinch. For instance, the French verb is so complicated that publishers put out useful books like Christopher Kenris's *Dictionary of 501 French Verbs Fully Conjugated in All the Tenses*. Kenris devotes one full page to each verb.

The verb, "parler," means "to speak, to talk." It takes these twenty-five forms:

parler, parle, parles, parlons, parlez, parlent, parlais, parlait, parlions, parliez, parlaient, parlai, parlas, parla, parlmes, parlates, parlèrent, parlasse, parlasses, parlât, parlussions, parlussiez, parlissent, parlé, parlant

Some of these forms are rarely used and are mainly found in earlier literature. In addition to these listed forms, there are a number of compound forms, using the auxiliary verb avoir. Many of these are very common.

The French verb parler is complicated. It takes much more time to master the conjugation of parler than it takes to master the conjugation of all the Esperanto verbs put together. The majority of the French verbs which end in -er are conjugated exactly like parler, so that once this verb has been mastered the knowledge acquired can be applied to a whole set of verbs. The -er verbs are said to be verbs of the first conjugation.

Similarly, many verbs that end in -ir follow the pattern of the verb finir ("to end, to finish"). These verbs are said to be verbs of the second conjugation. Many verbs that end in -re follow the pattern of rendre ("to give back"), and this pattern, the pattern of the third conjugation, also must be learned separately.

Unfortunately a great many French verbs are irregular. They vary from the normal pattern to a greater or lesser degree. These variations must be learned individually. The irregular verbs include many of the most common verbs in the language such as the verbs for to be, to have, to make / to do, to go, to laugh, to drink and to be quiet.

Mastering the French verb requires an enormous amount of study. Many students who have spent years studying French never fully master the French verb.

In comparison, the English verb is easy. Many English verbs only have four forms such as "laugh, laughs, laughed, laughing" and "hope, hopes, hoped, hoping."

There are a few hundred irregular verbs in English. They are called "strong verbs." The regular verbs, such as to laugh and to hope, are called "weak verbs." English irregular verbs must be learned individually. The most complicated of them is the verb "to be" which has these forms: be, am, art, is, are, was, wert, were, been, being. However, there is no other verb in English

which rivals "to be" in complexity, and any French verb makes "to be" seem very simple in comparison.

The difficulty with the few hundred English irregular verbs is limited mainly to the past tense. Regular verbs add -ed to form the past tense ("I learn / I learned"). They use the same form as the past tense to form the past participle ("I have learned"). There are some minor variations that deal with spelling changes as in "I study / I studied / I have studied" where the final y does not become yed but ied.

The irregular or strong verbs make changes inside the verb itself in order to form the past tense and the past participle. Each of these changes must be learned individually. They follow no regular pattern. Here are a number of them:

INFINITIVE	PAST TENSE	PAST PARTICIPLE
drink	drank	drunk
stink	stank	stunk
think	thought	thought
cling	clung	clung
fling	flung	flung
sing	sang	sung
lie	lay	lain
lay	laid	lain
tear	tore	torn
wear	wore	worn
hear	heard	heard
bite	bit	bitten
fight	fought	fought

If the pattern of "drink / drank / drunk" were always followed we would have "think / thank / thunk", which sounds barbaric or ridiculous to English speakers. No one proposes changing this. However, this feature of the language creates a definite learning burden. However the burden in English can be measured in terms of a dozen or so hours rather than hundreds of hours, as in the case of French.

Zamenhof appreciated the relative simplicity of the English verb. In designing his plan for an international language, he improved upon it considerably. He created one simple pattern which every verb in the entire language follows perfectly. That pattern can easily be mastered in one or two hours. (Mastering a pattern does not mean merely learning it but learning it so well that you use it instinctively.)

One rule that Zamenhof followed in creating his plan for Esperanto was that no word and no part of a word would ever change inside itself. There would be no words such as "mouse / mice" or "sit / sat." Words in Esperanto take endings. They take prefixes and suffixes. They can be combined to form compound words, like the English words "houseboat" and "boathouse." However, words always stay the same inside of themselves.

Following this rule, Zamenhof created the different forms of his simple verbs by adding just six endings. Here they are in the Esperanto verbs esti ("to be") and pensi ("to think") along with their English counterparts:

Infinitive	esti	to be
Present	estas	am, art, is, are
Past	estis	was, wert, were
Future	estos	will be / shall be
Conditional	estus	would be
Imperative	estu	be!
Infinitive	pensi	to think
Present	pensas	think, thinks
Past	pensis	thought
Future	pensos	will think / shall think
Conditional	pensus	would think
Imperative	pensu	think!

Every Esperanto verb follows this pattern. A book such as a Dictionary of 501 Esperanto Verbs Fully Conjugated in All the Tenses would be a joke because you would find the exact same pattern repeated on each one of the 501 pages.

Esperanto has a system of participles that is also the same for every verb in the language. It is used to create nouns, adjectives and adverbs from verbs.

There are three active participles, ant (present), int (past) and ont (future). There are also three passive participles, at (present), it (past) and ot (future). We may add on the noun ending –o to form a noun, the adjectival ending –a to form an adjective or the adverbial ending –e to form an adverb. Here are some examples:

amanto	=	someone who is loving
aminto	=	someone who loved
amonto	=	someone who is going to love
amato	=	someone who is loved
amito	=	someone who was loved
amoto	=	someone who is going to be loved
tiu amanta viro	=	that loving man
tiu aminta viro	=	that man who was loving
tiu amonta viro	=	that man who is going to be loving
tiu amata viro	=	that man who is loved
tiu amita viro	=	that man who was loved
tiu amota viro	=	that man who is going to be loved
amante	=	loving
aminte	=	having loved
amonte	=	about to love
amate	=	being loved
amite	=	having been loved
amote	=	about to be loved

The following sentences show how these participles work in action. Notice how one Esperanto participle can be the equivalent of an entire English clause. This is a particularly elegant feature of the language.

Tiu aminta viro nun malamegis ŝin.

That man who had once been so loving now detested her.

Ni mortontoj salutas vin!

We who are about to die salute you!

La mortigita prezidento, Kennedy, estis enterigata en Virginia.

President Kennedy, who was killed, was buried in Virginia.

Ekamonte, ōi subite dum momento vidis lin kiel li vere estis.

About to fall in love, she suddenly, for a moment, saw him as he really was.

When Esperanto requires the student to put in some effort studying something, it is never to master irregularities. Rather, it is to make possible a more precise or more economical way of expressing an idea.

Because all Esperanto verbs follow just one pattern, the student can learn that pattern once and for all and apply it to every verb in the language with absolute confidence. The student can trust that pattern. Students of Esperanto never have to worry about making a mistake when they apply a pattern which they have learned in a new situation. In English, French and most other national languages students always have to consider whether an individual word follows a regular rule or is one of numerous exceptions.

So we see that there are many areas where English is very difficult to learn, such as in spelling. In those areas Esperanto is very easy to learn. There are areas in which English is very easy to learn, such as in not having genders. In those areas too, Esperanto is very easy to learn. There are yet other areas in which English is comparatively easy to learn, such as the conjugation of verbs. In those areas too, Esperanto is very easy to learn.

Chapter Eight

The Cost-Benefit Ratio

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This is the eighth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village*. by Sylvan Zaft.

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There are many other ways in which Esperanto grammar is easier than that of various national languages. Some of these ways in which Esperanto is easier have to do with the ways that people use language to express respect or familiarity.

Many Verbs Instead of One

When two Japanese individuals meet, they have to quickly determine whether they are on the same social level or whether one of them is on a higher social level than the other. Exchanging business cards is a serious matter in Japan because it is an effective way to make this determination.

Once Japanese have determined their relative social status they choose different verbs in order to show respect or familiarity. When an employer speaks to a servant the employer will use one Japanese verb meaning "to see" while the servant will use a different verb that means "to see." The second verb is used when the speaker wishes to show respect to someone of higher status. There may be three or four different verbs which all have the same meaning but which carry additional tones of various degrees of respect or familiarity.

The American Nobel-Prize winning physicist, Richard Feynman had an interesting experience with this feature of the language when he tried to learn a little Japanese while working at the Yukawa Institute in Kyoto. Feynman asked his Japanese counterparts to translate two sentences into their language. The sentences were: "I solve the Dirac Equation" and "Would you solve the Dirac Equation?" From their translations he learned that he would have to use a different verb for "solve" in each sentence, a verb that showed some humility in "I solve the Dirac Equation" and a verb that showed greater respect in "Would you solve the Dirac Equation?"

When Feynman realized that he would have to learn a number of Japanese verbs for each English verb and master the appropriate usage of each he decided that Japanese was not the language for him, and he gave up his attempts to learn it. The Korean language has a similar system but is even more complex.

(Note: For Feynman's experience see: Feynman, *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman*, Bantam Books, New York, 1989, pp. 224-225.)

In English we show various degrees of respect or familiarity or contempt by our choice of vocabulary. The following sentences are all used in order to communicate the idea that the other person should make way:

"Excuse me, sir."

"Pardon me."

"Move aside, please."

"Move aside!"

"Get out of the way!"

Although these sentences are all used to communicate the same desire they are quite different from each other in terms of the amount of respect that they show. Because the Japanese verbs convey different degrees of respect, the Japanese can show respect or lack thereof when they say something like, "Do you see that?" Theirs is a very subtle and nuanced system.

Such a system is very useful for showing respect or familiarity. However, it does make a language more difficult to learn and it would be out of place in an easy-to-learn international language.

Many You's

Another way of showing respect or familiarity is by the choice in some languages of the correct word for the idea of you.

The French have two words for you when speaking to one individual. They use tu when speaking to children and to people they are close to and when speaking with people who are inferior. Vous is more formal. In the Maigret murder mysteries of George Simenon, when the detective, Maigret, starts questioning a suspect he uses vous. Once he has established that the suspect is guilty, he switches to the tu form. Now that he has identified the person being interrogated as a criminal, Maigret no longer accords him the respect of vous.

The French system of you is very crude compared to the system used in Indonesian. In Indonesian, which is otherwise an extremely simple language to learn, the concept which is expressed by the word "you" in English is extraordinarily complex. For example, certain words are used for "you" when speaking to children, others when speaking to superiors, others for speaking to someone you do not know, others for speaking to people you know a little bit. You use different words for "you" depending on the sex of the person being addressed, their age, their social status and the degree of respect that you wish to show to them.

(Note: Claude Piron, *Le défi des langues*, Paris, 1989, p. 61.)

The "you" system of Indonesian is highly complex and very subtle and conveys far more shades of meaning than the simple "you" of English or "vi" of Esperanto. However, to introduce this system in a language which is intended for use as an easy-to-learn international language would be just as counterproductive as it would be to introduce a spelling system as complex as that of English or a system of verb conjugation as complex as that of French.

Diminutives

In Russian there is a large number of variations that can be made on a person's name in order to show the degree of closeness that the speaker feels. Take the common Russian name, "Maria," for instance:

1. "Maria" is a full, official name.
2. One way of creating a shorter form of it is to change it to "Masha." "Masha" is a nickname. We do something like this in English when we move from "Donald" to "Don" or "Joseph" to "Joe."
3. A further step is taken when the name is changed to "Mashka." This indicates familiarity. It may or may not indicate friendliness. It may indicate a touch of vulgarity. Whether it indicates vulgarity or goes along with friendship will be determined by the context of the relationship in which it is used. (In the days of serfdom this was the form used by a master speaking to a serf.)
4. A yet further step is taken when the name becomes "Mashenka." This definitely shows affection. It would be used when talking to someone like a child who is considered to be little and nice and someone the speaker might feel tender towards. A similar form of an ending can be used to refer to a cat in an endearing way.

Parallel to these last three forms are three other forms which are their precise equivalents:

2. Manya = Masha
3. Manka = Mashka
4. Manyechka = Mashenka.

There are similar variations with the other names in the language. One interesting feature of Russian is that some of these endearing diminutives can be attached to features of the physical world like flowers or trees or the sun. Thus, by using diminutives, Russian speakers can portray a range of feelings and attitudes towards even inanimate objects. Just by using a diminutive a speaker of Russian can convey feelings of tenderness or affection or love towards a feature of the natural world such as the rain or the sun.

(Note: This material on Russian diminutive comes from a personal communication from Irina Stiop.)

Russian is a much richer and more expressive language because it has this feature. However, for the foreign student of the language, this feature provides an extra learning burden. Such an elaborate system has no place in an easy-to-learn international language.

Nonetheless, if a planned international language has no way to express nuances of feeling then it will be more like a soulless code than like a real language.

Zamenhof compromised by introducing just two affectionate endings in Esperanto, one that is applied to males and the other to females.

In Esperanto, if it is a male we are speaking about, we simply take the first part of his name or the word that refers to him and add the ending –ĉjo; if a female we add the ending –njo. "Grandfather" is avo and "grandpa" is avĉjo. For "grandmother" and "grandma" the forms are avino and avnjo. These two ways of creating endearing diminutives are applied universally, but, normally, only to people and pets.

In English we get the same effect but not in a systematic way with such terms as "father," "dad," "daddy," "pop" and "pa" and "mother," "mom," "mommy," and "ma." We do it with certain names but not others. "Kent" does not change but for "James" we also have "Jim" and "Jimmy." For each name or word the different forms must be learned separately, another little extra learning chore.

The Russian system of diminutives and the Indonesian system of expressing the idea of "you" are easily absorbed by native speakers and do not create any overwhelming problem for them. An international language is meant to be learned by adolescents and adults as well as by children. It should be a learner-friendly language. If some possibilities which are realized in one language or another are lost because they would require far too much time to learn, that is inevitable. A language which contained all of the special ways of expressing the subtleties of all of the world's thousands of languages would be so fantastically intricate that it would be unlearnable.

In considering a language for purposes of international communication it is useful to examine its features according to an estimate of their cost-benefit ratios. It is useful to determine how much extra work it takes to master a certain feature, and how much users of that language benefit from mastering that feature.

Mastering English spelling requires an enormous amount of time and energy. The cost is large. Mastering Esperanto spelling is a very simple task. The cost is small. The benefit in both cases (being able to spell correctly) is equal. Thus, when it comes to spelling, there is a much more favorable cost-benefit ratio in Esperanto than in English.

Mastering the Indonesian system of you involves a very large cost. Mastering the Esperanto system where, as in modern English, there is just one word, requires a tiny cost. The benefit in Indonesian is greater than in English or Esperanto because many fine shades of meaning can be indicated by the choice of the appropriate you. However, this benefit is in no way proportionate to the cost involved. In those cases where it is important to indicate the sex of the person addressed or the age or one's attitude, there are other means available, including one's tone of voice.

Let us look at some other features of Esperanto and this time compare them with English according to their cost-benefit ratio. First let us take a look at the number system.

Easier Numbers

Here are the first ten numbers in English and in Esperanto:

one	1	unu
two	2	du
three	3	tri
four	4	kvar
five	5	kvin
six	6	ses
seven	7	sep

eight	8	ok
nine	9	naŭ
ten	10	dek

So far the numbers are equally easy to learn. But now English becomes a little more difficult:

eleven	11	dek unu
twelve	12	dek du
thirteen	13	dek tri
fourteen	14	dek kvar
fifteen	15	dek kvin
sixteen	16	dek ses
seventeen	17	dek sep
eighteen	18	dek ok
nineteen	19	dek naŭ
twenty	20	dudek

Whereas English institutes a regularity with thirteen where each word up to "twenty" ends in –teen, Esperanto starts a regular pattern two numbers earlier where each word begins with dek (ten). The English words for "13" and "15" are not formed according to the rule that governs "14" and "16 through 19," which is to write the word for the second digit and follow it with the ending teen. For "13" the student cannot use the logical and consistent form threeteen and for "15" the student cannot use the logical and consistent form fiveteen. In Esperanto the student can always rely on the logical and consistent form. This dispenses with another extra learning load. Because there are so many tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of tiny extra learning loads in English compared to Esperanto, as a foreign language, English is incredibly more difficult to master than Esperanto.

Let us now count by tens to one hundred in both languages:

ten	10	dek
twenty	20	dudek
thirty	30	tridek
forty	40	kvardek
fifty	50	kvindek
sixty	60	sesdek
seventy	70	sepdek
eighty	80	okdek
ninety	90	naŭdek
one hundred	100	cent

Notice that all of the Esperanto numbers past ten up to one hundred are composed by arranging the numbers from one to ten, "unu" to "dek" in different ways. There is no need to learn how to spell new forms such as "forty" in which "four" has been shortened to for or "fifty" in which "five" has been turned into fif.

Even in learning how to say and spell the numbers Esperanto is definitely easier than English and much easier than the more complex French system in which, for instance, the number 96 is quatre vingts seize which literally means "four twenties sixteen."

Easier Pronouns

There are similar advantages in learning Esperanto when it comes to learning pronouns. Of course the pronouns in English are simpler than those in Indonesian. But the pronouns in Esperanto are easier yet.

English Pronouns

Subject	Possessive	Indirect Object	Direct Object
I	my	me	me
you	your	you	you
he	his	him	him
she	her	her	her
it	its	it	it
we	our	us	us
they	their	them	them

In English the indirect object pronouns and the direct object pronouns are the same.

There is no rule that enables the foreign student of English to automatically go from I to my to me or from my to your to his. Each of these items has to be learned individually. On the other hand, in Esperanto there are regular patterns which easily enable the student to go from mi to mia to mi and from mia to via to lia, as the following chart shows.

Esperanto Pronouns

Subject	Possessive	Indirect Object	Direct Object
mi	mia	mi	min
vi	via	vi	vin
li	lia	li	lin
ŝi	ŝia	ŝi	ŝin
ĝi	ĝia	ĝi	ĝin
ni	nia	ni	nin
ili	ilia	ili	ilin

In Esperanto the subject pronouns and the indirect object pronouns are the same.

In these Esperanto pronouns we find a number of regularities which make them easier to learn:

All subject pronouns and indirect object pronouns end in -i.

All possessive pronouns take the ending -a.

All the direct object pronouns take the ending -n.

Here again there is a distinct though small advantage in the cost-benefit ratio for Esperanto.

Because of the simple rules and the lack of exceptions, a student who wants to form a possessive pronoun adds -a to the subject pronoun. (My dog = mia hundo.)

Because of the simple rules and the lack of exceptions, a student who wants to form a direct object pronoun adds -n to the subject pronoun. (I see her = Mi vidas ŝin.)

A student who wants to use an indirect object pronoun simply uses the subject pronoun to do this job. (I am going to her now = Mi iras al ŝi nun.)

When you add this quite small learning advantage to all the other small and large matters in which Esperanto lets you use logic instead of rote memory, it adds up to a very big total advantage over other languages such as French or English or German or Japanese.

Easier Plurals

Another such advantage is found in the area of forming plurals.

Chinese is the simplest language when it comes to forming plurals. Chinese has no separate plural form. When a Chinese speaker says the equivalent of "three dog," the Chinese listener does not need a special plural form to inform her that what is being spoken of here is more than one.

Esperanto plurals are not that simple, but they are very simple. In Esperanto all nouns take the ending -o. Here are some Esperanto nouns which are cognates of English nouns with the number one (unu) in front of each:

unu elefanto

unu piano

unu suno

unu birdo

unu nesto

The plural in Esperanto is always formed by adding -j to the -o ending, so the plurals are (with the word for "two", du, in front of each:

du elefantoj

du pianoj

du sunoj

du birdoj

du nestoj

The ending -oj is pronounced like the English "oy" in "boy."

Please see if you can apply this rule and form the plural of the following nouns by simply adding the letter j to each noun.

unu tago du _____.

unu policano du _____.

unu muso du _____.

unu infano du _____.

unu cervo du _____.

Even though you do not know Esperanto you can perform this exercise effortlessly. You would be able to do so no matter which nouns were given. You simply copy the noun and add -j to it and you are always right. In Esperanto you can trust your thinking powers, the power of your mind to take a single rule and apply it consistently in an enormous number of cases.

Foreign students of English are not so lucky. When people learn English as a foreign language they learn not to trust their instincts but to always "check it out." They do learn a simple rule in English, the rule that says that you form the plural by adding -s. They learn that they should sometimes pronounce this s with an s-sound, as in "lamps," and sometimes with a z-sound, as in "cards." Right away there is a little problem, a pronunciation problem. When should you use the s-sound and when the z-sound? This is not a problem for the native speaker, but it is an actual little problem for the non-native speaker.

Sometimes you do not add -s but -es, as in "boxes." The foreign student has to learn when this applies and when it does not apply.

Then the foreign student has to learn a small number of exceptions where you do not add -s at all.

Once again the student of English learns a pattern and then discovers that she must only trust it sometimes. Here are the English words that correspond to the Esperanto words which I asked you to give the plurals of earlier. How many of these could be figured out by a non-English speaker who was given the basic rules of forming plurals in English?

day

policeman

mouse

child

deer

Suppose the non-English speaker remembers the rule, "to form the plural, add -s." Suppose he or she carries it out with these five items. His or her score will be 20%. Only days is correct. Policemen, mice, child and deer are wrong. The irregular plurals policemen, mice, children and deer must be memorized individually. Look at the full chart:

English Singular	English Plural	Esperanto Singular	Esperanto Plural
day	days	tago	tagoj
policeman	policemen/policemen	policano	policanoj
mouse	mice/mice	muso	musoj
child	children/children	infano	infanoj
deer	deer/deer	cervo	cervoj

There are other complexities too because there are some English words which come only in the plural even though the concept may be singular such as "trousers," "pliers" and "cattle." To put these in the singular, special expressions must be learned such as "a pair of trousers" and "a

head of cattle." This adds another tiny extra learning burden, but all those tens or hundreds of thousands of tiny extra learning burdens add up to a huge learning load. For native speakers this learning load is not terrible because English is the language that they use all of the time but for the foreign student who learns English for only occasional use as an international language the extra learning load is not particularly welcome.

Some people have objected to Esperanto saying that all this easy-to-learn patterning makes Esperanto not a natural language but, on the contrary, an artificial language.

In one sense they are right. Nobody sat down and made a plan for English. It just developed. Someone did deliberately spend years developing a plan for Esperanto. So in the sense that the plan for Esperanto was man-made, Esperanto is an artificial language.

In another way Esperanto is more natural than English. We learn things more naturally when they follow a recognizable pattern. Esperanto is rich in such patterns which are without exceptions. English is filled with exceptions to its rules, and having to learn thousands of such exceptions feels somewhat artificial to most of us. Foreign students of English (or French, or German or Russian etc.) have to be always on guard for the exceptions to the rules. Students of Esperanto can simply follow the rules and know that when they do so they are speaking correctly. This enables them to speak the language fluently and naturally after only a year or so of study.

Chapter Nine

Real Life Experiences With Esperanto

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This is the eighth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village*. by Sylvan Zaft.

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I would like to start by comparing my personal experiences with two languages I have learned, French and Esperanto. I studied French for four years in high school with excellent teachers. I also took a one semester university class in classical French literature in which everything—readings, lectures, discussions, tests—was in French. From my second year in high school I read French literature on my own. I read an occasional book in French while doing research in history.

For many years I subscribed to French periodicals. I have read thousands of articles in the language as well as more than a hundred books. Although I have never visited France I have been told by native speakers that I now have a good accent. I speak the language fluently and I read it rapidly and well. However, when I speak, I make enormous numbers of mistakes, mistakes of gender, of verb form, of idioms. Although my French is quite understandable and I can certainly get by in the language, my French no doubt would grate on a Parisian's nerves.

When I read I like to have a dictionary handy because on most pages that I read there are a few words or expressions which I do not know. I can write in fairly correct French but to do so I need to have reference books at hand. I have to constantly consult dictionaries about genders of nouns and adjectives as well as idiomatic expressions. I also have to check the spelling of words. I need to have a book that conjugates verbs because I have to constantly check on certain verbs to figure out if they are regular or irregular and what the appropriate form is. It takes me many times longer to write in French than in English because I have to check out so many things. Even so, no matter how much trouble I take, errors slip through. I am always afraid of making a mistake and being open, like a school child, to corrections. When speaking the language I am afraid of putting in the wrong word and making myself appear ridiculous. This is after spending seven or eight thousand hours with the language.

There is no way I will ever be comfortable speaking or writing the language with native speakers. This is not because I am stupid. I have plenty of fine academic credentials and I scored very well on standardized tests. The problem is not with my mind. It is just that French, like English, like Hindi, like Arabic, like Chinese is a fantastically difficult language for non-native speakers to learn.

My experience with Esperanto has been dramatically different. First of all I taught the language to myself, something that would have been impossible with French. After three months of rather intensive self-study I was ready to write long articles in the language for the newsletter of

our state association and I was ready to correspond with people all over the world. After receiving a few letters I rarely needed a dictionary to read a letter. I used dictionaries extensively to check that I was using the right word but I never had to use dictionaries to check the spelling of words which I knew how to pronounce. I used and use Esperanto dictionaries when writing about as much as I use English dictionaries when writing in my native language. My use of English dictionaries is mainly to check spelling. (Spell-check computer programs help a lot, but they are helpless in the face of homonyms such as boar and bore, there and their, right and write and two and to and too.) My use of Esperanto dictionaries is mainly to check that the word that comes to mind actually exists and is not one that I am making up by Esperantizing an English or French word.

From the beginning of my international correspondence, I was able to express any idea in Esperanto that I could have expressed in English. My correspondents in countries such as the Soviet Union, Brazil, China, Japan, Senegal, East Germany and the Netherlands, understood me and I understood them just as well as if we shared the same native tongue.

I carried on a debate about the purported merits of Communism with a dedicated Communist who was a professor of history in Gorky, Russia. An East German correspondent hated life under Communism. He told me about singers who were no longer permitted to sing in public because their songs were considered to be against the regime. He told me that the medicine which his wife needed desperately was completely unavailable in his country, at least to ordinary people. (She was fortunate to have an uncle in West Germany who could send her the medicine.) He told me how the Communists had imprisoned his father in a way that undermined his health and led to his premature death. His father's crime was to participate in a strike of streetcar workers.

My correspondent in Vladivostok told me how he created a Soviet-American friendship club and how the members of the club would bake a cake in the form of an American flag. He told me about how things were in such short supply that he had to get up and stand in line at four in the morning in order to be able to buy a television set six hours later. If he got in line later they would all be sold out before his turn came. (I recently got a letter from him in which he told me how he had bought a sports car and drove through the countryside of his part of Asiatic Russia for the very first time. He wrote the letter on his computer using a Russian translation of the same word processing program that I use.)

In the dying days of Communism he told how the authorities offered him membership in the Communist Party. He explained to me how he got out of it by saying that he "did not deserve such a high honor."

My correspondent in East Germany wrote in excellent Esperanto. He had once won a prize for translating in the language. His letters were publishable as they came from his typewriter and, later, from the computer which a West German relative provided him with. My Vladivostok correspondent made a good number of errors, more errors than I did, but we had no trouble understanding each other.

In each case I was not using their language and they were not using my language. We were both using our language because Esperanto is a language that belongs equally to every individual who learns it. So we were comfortable using our language with each other. We were not afraid of provoking laughter by inadvertently saying something ridiculous due to the wrong choice of a word.

A Chinese professor visiting the United States described Esperanto as "a linguistic handshake." When two people shake hands, each person reaches out part way. If you speak Esperanto each person has already made a reasonable effort in order to learn the language so

that they can both communicate with each other. This makes for quite a different kind of experience than the Chinese professor has when he speaks in English to Americans. He has already made an enormous effort to learn English imperfectly. The people he talks to have made no special effort at all.

I have never traveled abroad to use Esperanto. Nonetheless I have had some interesting experiences speaking the language here in the United States. About ten months after I started to study the language, I had the occasion to show a visitor, Joel Brozovsky, around the Detroit area. During the few hours we spent together we spoke almost no English. I was stunned to find that I spoke the language fluently and understood it well. It almost felt like cheating, being fluent in a language after spending only some months with it. No doubt I made errors but nowhere near the number of errors I would have made in French after spending many thousands of hours over a period of more than thirty years with that language. There was no comparison at all between the enormous effort it took me to learn an imperfect French and the effort it took me to reach the point where I could communicate comfortably and effectively if not flawlessly in Esperanto.

Joel Brozovsky was a young American who had taken seven thousand dollars with him to visit Europe after studying Esperanto in an introductory course. He planned to stay as long as his savings would last. The seven thousand dollars enabled Brozovsky to travel in Europe and the Far East for three years. Esperantists tend to welcome visiting Esperantists, and so many people invited him to stay with them that his money lasted that long a time. Of course, after those three years in "Esperantoland" he spoke the language "like a native."

Two years later, in 1989, I drove a Chinese visitor from Chicago, where we had attended an Esperanto convention, to a Detroit suburb not far from where I lived. We spent several hours in the car and ate together at a restaurant. She spoke no English and I spoke no Chinese. We got along just fine in our common, easier-to-learn international language.

Earlier that same year I was vacationing with a friend on Cape Cod. It was very early in the summer, before the crowds arrived. One day we went down to a beach to do some bird watching. Two very old men came up. One of them went swimming while the other waited. We chatted with the waiting man. He told us that the swimmer was his brother-in-law, an ethnic Russian from Lithuania who spoke no English. During his visit they communicated in German. My friend asked if the swimmer knew Esperanto. It turned out that he had studied it more than sixty years previously, when he was a teen-ager.

When the old man got out of the water I started to speak to him in Esperanto. His eyes lit up and he started to talk so rapidly that I had to ask him to please slow down. He told me that he had known people who knew Zamenhof. We met once more on the beach and, after he returned to the Soviet Union, we corresponded for some time.

Esperanto has made all kinds of contacts possible between people. Those who learn it tend to be friendly and idealistic. Sometimes people from two different language groups meet through Esperanto and marry. Their children grow up in a home in which Esperanto is the home language. In this way there are some hundreds of native speakers of Esperanto, all of whom, of course, are bilingual.

The language spoken in such homes is a highly expressive one. This is because of the tremendous freedom which speakers of Esperanto enjoy when it comes to word formation. In languages like English, French, German and so on, great expressiveness is achieved by means of idioms. Idioms are colorful expressions which mean something other than they appear to mean. Idioms make a language very rich, but they present an enormous obstacle to non-native speakers. As we shall see in a later chapter, Esperanto achieves its great expressiveness in an

entirely different way, one that not only does not add to a student's learning burden, but actually reduces it.

Chapter Ten

No Stumbling Over Idioms

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This is the tenth chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village.

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It is very easy to make a mistake speaking a foreign language. People often get a good laugh out of the way foreigners butcher their language. I remember once overhearing a conversation in a waiting room between a girl who was going to start high school and a much older woman who might have been her grandmother. The girl said she was interested in taking French. The older woman warned her, "Oh, they don't teach you the kind of French that they speak in France. When you go over to France and speak French the way they teach you in high school, the people just laugh at you."

Funny English

Native speakers of English are usually very patient with people from other countries who do not speak English well, but they enjoy a good laugh once in a while at the way non-native speakers mess up the language. A number of collections of these gaffes exist. Here are a few from Richard Lederer's *Anguished English*:

A sign in a Swiss hotel read: "Because of the impropriety of entertaining guests of the opposite sex in the bedroom, it is suggested that the lobby be used for this purpose."

A Tokyo bar offered "Special cocktails for ladies with nuts."

In a Finnish washroom a sign explained, "To stop the drip, turn cock to right."

And a Parisian dress shop offered "Dresses for street walking."

On the one hand these are very funny. On the other hand they show how difficult it is to learn English as a foreign language. The poor Japanese who wrote the line for the Tokyo bar was obviously unaware that the word "nuts" is not only used to refer to things like almonds and pecans but also to testicles. The teachers of English in the Japanese schools which he attended probably never taught him that lesson in any of his many long years of study of the English tongue. The writer of the sign for the Parisian dress shop did not understand that "walking along the street" means something quite different from "streetwalking" which means looking for customers on the street for prostitution.

Claude Piron has discussed this terrible difficulty of English as a foreign language in his book about the language problem, *Le défi des langues*. He presents a number of examples, similar

to those of Lederer, not from the point of view of an American or an Englishman having fun with a foreigner's inadvertent howlers, but from the point of view of the foreign student who has studied English diligently for many years and who comes up with what seems to be a perfectly sensible sentence in accordance with the rules of the language but who suddenly finds native speakers of English laughing at him. The particular group of words which he put together happened to have a special meaning which he did not intend at all.

In one of his examples Piron refers to the sign in English at an airport in Moscow that read, "If this is your first visit to Russia, you are welcome to it." The writer of the sign intended a warm greeting. He did not realize that while the phrase "you are welcome" is warm and friendly, if you add the word "to it" you come up with a phrase which is sarcastic and derogatory.

Another of Piron's examples is about a sign in a Norwegian bar which said in English, with great politeness, "Ladies are requested not to have children in the bar." The writer of that sign knew that "to have" means "to possess." He was not aware that in the phrase "to have a child" the two words "to have" have quite a different meaning. There, as every native speaker of English knows, the two words mean "to give birth."

In a speech given in Paris Piron referred to the unpleasant experience of a woman minister of the Danish government who remarked, "I'm at the beginning of my period." Native English speakers broke out laughing because she seemed to be talking about her menstrual period. She had in fact been referring to the period of years for which she had been chosen to serve her country.

It is very difficult to feel comfortable speaking or writing a language when you have to be continuously on guard lest your most commonplace utterance provoke raucous laughter. English, the world's most widely used international language today, is filled with linguistic traps because of its vast number of idiomatic expressions. The same is true of French.

French Idioms

As a student of French I have a number of collections of French idioms such as Denoeu's 2001 French and English Idioms and Hérail and Lovatt's Dictionary of Modern Colloquial French. In the latter book I learn that the French word *cuisine*, which I know ordinarily refers to cooking, has the idiomatic meanings of "underhanded scheming," "falsifying of accounts," "tricks of the trade" and, in one expression, "making a racket." There are related English idioms for some of these meanings such as "they cooked up a plot to get rid of the boss" or "they cooked the books." I also learn that *gendarme*, which I thought only meant a kind of police officer, also means "a bossy woman," "smoked herring" and "excrement."

As a reasonably diligent student of French over a period of some 45 years, I was completely unaware of these meanings. The average Frenchman, I am sure, is not. If someone says that they enjoy having "gendarme" for lunch, he will know that they are talking about a kind of fish. And if someone says that during a long hike they had to walk off the road and go into the woods to plant a "gendarme," he will not think of a secret burial of a police officer.

6000 Hours a Year

When you learn a language to use every day for the rest of your life, such as your native language or the language of a country you have moved to, it makes sense to take the time to learn all of these special meanings of words and expressions so that you do not wind up saying something stupid. In learning your native language you pick up an enormous number of idiomatic expressions automatically because you normally use that language every day of the

year during sixteen waking hours as well as your hours spent dreaming in it at night. The daytime use alone works out to nearly 6000 hours a year or, in twenty years, some 120,000 hours. During this time you are constantly practicing your native language. You think in it, read in it, speak in it, hear it, and you are constantly updating and perfecting your knowledge of all of its distinctive features.

Most people use an international language only occasionally, when they travel, when they read something in it, when they correspond with someone in another country, when they encounter a visitor from another country. They may go days or weeks at a time without using it. But when they have occasion to use it again, they want it to be there. They do not want it to be so complicated that it is very easy to forget.

Some years ago I spoke with a woman from Yugoslavia who was studying in the United States. She had been an Esperantist far longer than I had. I asked her about her ability in Esperanto and how easy it was for her to speak it. She said that when she attended an international Esperanto convention after a long layoff, her Esperanto was somewhat rusty at first but by the second day she was perfectly fluent again.

If a person has learned Esperanto well and has not merely dabbled in it, the language will come back fairly quickly after a layoff. If it is practiced for just ten minutes a day, full proficiency will be retained. One of the reasons for this is that students who have learned Esperanto can speak it with confidence. They do not have to be afraid that when they put ordinary words together such as "welcome," "to" and "it," she will be saying something laughable. In Esperanto words retain their ordinary meanings. The language is almost completely free from idiomatic phrases. All of the idiomatic expressions in the language can fit on an index card.

Some have argued that this lack of colorful idioms is a shortcoming of the language. However, it saves hundreds or even thousands of hours of study. Just as Esperanto gets along perfectly well without a complex system of expressing the concept of you and without a wealth of irregular verbs and without a rich variety of ways of spelling its twenty-eight sounds, so Esperanto gets along perfectly well without the many thousands of idiomatic expressions which abound in other languages. A great wealth of idioms is appropriate for a language which its speakers use 6000 hours every year. After all, the speakers are constantly practicing them. This abundance of idioms would be a powerful impediment to communication in a language that is learned for occasional use between speakers of different native tongues.

Many Englishes—Many Germans

There is another problem with learning the idioms of the English language, and that is that the idioms are often very different in different kinds of English. The foreign student who learns Standard American English will run into difficulties when visiting Britain, and the foreign student who learns Standard British English will run into difficulties when visiting the United States. One way to deal with this problem is to get a good British/American dictionary such as the British/American Language Dictionary of Norman Moss. There the foreign student of English learns that pecker means "courage" in Standard British English but "penis" in Standard American English. In Britain foreign students may properly say, "Keep your pecker up," but they should be very careful not to repeat this British idiom in America. As a house guest in Britain a woman may politely ask her hosts, "Please knock me up in the morning," but she should be careful not to say this in America where, instead of meaning "to wake someone," to knock up means to get someone pregnant.

These are only two amusing examples of the differences between the two standard forms of English. When you think of all of the other forms of English—Cockney, Appalachian, Jamaican,

Papuan and so on—knowing one of the two forms of standard English may not be enough for effective communication everywhere in the English-speaking world.

For example, a French woman who had studied English for years was able to communicate fairly well in London. However, when she found herself in villages far from London, she could not understand what people were saying. An American spent a week in Scotland where his wife had some business. The Scottish people whom he met understood him perfectly well. After all, they had heard Standard American English on shows like "Dallas" on the telly and they had seen lots of American films in their local cinema. Unfortunately the American had not watched a lot of Scottish dramas on TV and he had not seen a lot of Scottish movies, and so he could not understand what they were saying. If everyone in the world had studied Esperanto for just a year or so, the American could have switched to Esperanto and they all would have understood each other perfectly well.

One rather curious advantage of the use of Esperanto by individuals who speak different variants of the same language is indicated by William Auld, a Scotsman who is a leading poet, editor and translator. Auld describes a long friendship he has enjoyed with an American Esperantist. Through the years whenever they have met they have conversed in Esperanto. They have spoken with each other in a common language which they speak in the same way. Because they speak English quite differently, Auld believes that their friendship would not have developed so deeply had their communication been in the different native dialects. When an American hears English spoken with a Scottish accent or when a Scotsman hears English spoken with an American accent, associations immediately come to mind, perhaps on a half-unconscious level. Sometimes they lead to pre-judgments. All of that is avoided when individuals converse in an international language that does not have different national dialects.

Just as there are many different Englishes which are spoken so there are many different Germans which are spoken. The vast majority of the Swiss are native speakers of German, but they have their own German dialect. Most of the time they speak a Swiss German that is completely unintelligible to students who have thoroughly mastered High German, the standard form of the language that is taught in foreign universities. A similar situation exists in many parts of Germany. On formal occasions and when they are speaking with people from other German-speaking areas the Swiss will speak High German.

A huge advantage of Esperanto as an international language is that you will not find dozens and hundreds of different local Esperantos. People may speak the language well or poorly but they do not speak in many different dialects nor do they use large numbers of bewildering idioms.

The Problem of Idioms

An idiom is an expression in a language which cannot be understood even though you know the meaning of each individual word in the language. The English expression "It's raining cats and dogs" is an example of an idiom. A foreigner who has carefully studied English and who knows the correct meaning of each word in this little sentence, unless he has learned the special idiomatic meaning of the sentence, will only be puzzled by it. This kind of thing happens all the time in national languages. It is almost unheard of in Esperanto.

One of my favorite French idioms is "Il m'a posé un lapin." Here are the meanings of the individual words:

Il	=	He
m'	=	to me

a	=	has
posé	=	put
un	=	a
lapin	=	rabbit

This little sentence has no more to do with a rabbit than the English sentence "It's raining cats and dogs" has to do with cats and dogs. It is the exact equivalent of the English sentence, "He stood me up." It means that he had agreed to meet me and he deliberately did not show up.

The English sentence "He stood me up" is also an idiom. It has nothing to do with taking a person who is sitting or lying down and causing them to stand up.

English is filled with little phrases that take a perfectly common verb and then add a preposition to create an entirely new meaning for the verb. Some examples are "she let me down," "he turns me off," "she runs around a lot" and "I won't put up with it any more." Such phrases are the bane of foreign students of English.

Confusing Prepositions

Let us make up a little example to show how confusing the idiomatic use of prepositions can be. These examples come from English but they could just as easily come from any one of a large number of unplanned languages.

Imagine that someone who knows a little English is visiting an American who meets him in New York. They travel together. At first they go by plane to Toronto. The American tells his friend, "We have to hurry up now. It's almost time to get on the plane."

From Toronto they travel to the city of Windsor by train. When they leave Toronto the American says, "Let's get on the train."

From Windsor they make their way to Detroit where they travel to a suburb by bus. The American says, "Let's get on the bus."

In the Detroit suburb they are met by some relatives of the Americans in a car. After they chat a little bit, it's time to go. The foreigner decides to take the bull by the horns and try out the new English expression which he has learned. He proudly says, "OK, now, let's get on the car."

He learns in a hurry that while it is very good idiomatic English to say "Let's get on the plane" and "Let's get on the train" and "Let's get on the bus" the sentence "Let's get on the car" does not have an idiomatic meaning, only the literal meaning of climbing on top of the vehicle, something which he did not intend at all.

Here are some other sentences involving prepositions, few of which will make sense to the foreign student who has not learned them specifically:

I feel under the weather.

A strange feeling came over me.

He can't get over her.

I'm not into that kind of thing.

I was relieved when he finally came to.

You're putting me on!

She really ran him down, right in front of the kids.

I ran into him the other day in the mall.

He runs off at the mouth.

Run through that again for me.

He ran up a big bill.

He worked up a good sweat.

He chatted her up.

Why shouldn't it be "A strange feeling came into me" or "A strange feeling came at me"? Well, the language just is not that way and so each of these usages must be learned individually. Foreign students have to learn each of these usages individually and that demands enormous amounts of time. Worse yet, even when foreign students learn thousands of such idioms unless they can practice the language continuously they will soon forget them.

Some of these idiomatic expressions are specific to certain dialects of English. For instance, the last one, "He chatted her up," is nonsense in Standard American English. In Standard British English it means to talk with someone in a flirtatious or seductive way. "To go up" in British English, but not in American English, means to enter a university.

The average foreign student of English never becomes really comfortable in the language. Foreign speakers who use English only from time to time as an international tongue have to speak slowly and deliberately and search for words. The words never come rapidly and automatically, as they do in their native tongues, as they do in English to the native speaker of English. Foreign speakers always have to be on the lookout so that they do not fall into one of the tens of thousands of nasty little traps of the language.

The student of Esperanto does not face this kind of problem. If students spend a few hundred hours seriously studying the language, they can become fluent in it and speak it well and not have to worry about idioms tripping them up.

Chapter Eleven

Word Formation in Esperanto

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This is the eleventh chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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The Invariable Morphemes of Esperanto

Languages combine morphemes to form words. Morphemes are little words and parts of words that have a meaning by themselves. In English, the word *dog* has just one morpheme, but *dogs* has two, *dog* and *s*. The morpheme *-s* means "more than one." The word *learned* contains the morpheme *-ed* which means "took place in the past."

In many languages, including English, morphemes change inside themselves. For instance, *mouse* changes to *mice* to indicate that there is more than one. *Give* changes to *gave* to show that the action took place in the past.

Every time an English morpheme changes inside itself, the foreign student has another new learning burden to deal with. Since hundreds of English morphemes change inside themselves, this adds up to a significant learning burden.

Esperanto morphemes never change inside themselves. Once students learn an Esperanto morpheme, they never have to worry about having to memorize variations of that morpheme.

Speakers and writers of Esperanto are free to combine the unchanging morphemes of the language to create new, instantly recognizable words.

Kur is a morpheme that means "run." (*Kur* by itself is not normally used as a word.) Adding the noun ending *-o* gives *kuro* which means "running." Adding different verbal endings gives these verb forms:

Add *-i*, and you form the infinitive *kuri* (to run.)

Add *-is*, and you form the past tense *kuris* (ran.)

Add *-as* and you form the present tense *kuras* (run, runs.)

Add *-os*, and you form the future tense *kuros* (will run, is going to run.)

Add –us and you form the conditional *kurus* (would run.)

Add –u and you form the imperative *kuru* (Run!)

These endings may be added to any morpheme to create a verb, as long as the resulting verb makes sense.

That is all that there is to it.

The Changing Morphemes of English

The corresponding English morpheme *run* does change inside itself. *Run* becomes *ran* to form the past tense. In the gerund *run* becomes *runn*, as part of *running*.

Here are eight English words that change inside themselves:

1. tooth teeth
2. think thought
3. meet met
4. forget forgettable
5. army armies
6. man men
7. sink sank sunk
8. lie lay lain lying

Here are the corresponding Esperanto forms for the above words. The unchanging root is in bold print. You cannot put the unchanging root in the English forms above in bold print because there are no unchanging roots.

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. | dento | dentoj | |
| 2. | pensas | pensis | |
| 3. | renkontas | renkontis | |
| 4. | forgesas | forgesis | |
| 5. | armeo | armeoj | |
| 6. | viro | viroj | |
| 7. | sinkas | sinkis | sinkinta |
| 8. | kuŝas | kuŝis | kuŝintakuŝanta |

English is rich in compound words, words formed by putting morphemes together. Some examples are "pussyfoot," "pushover," "muckraker," "ferryman" and "crankshaft." Speakers of Esperanto are free to put together not only short words but any morphemes whatsoever in order to form new words. The only limitation is that they must make sense. It has been said that word formation in Esperanto is governed by logic. Word formation in English is governed by an enormous number of arbitrary rules.

The Freedom to Create New Words by Combining Morphemes

Someone once asked, "How many words are there in Esperanto?"

The answer is "An indefinite number." Because speakers of Esperanto may combine the elements of the language in any way that makes sense, they can freely create new words out of

existing components and be understood by people who never heard or saw those new words before. Someone who has mastered just a thousand basic morphemes of Esperanto can create tens of thousands of words from them.

Speakers of languages such as English and French do not enjoy this enormous degree of freedom. Consider these English words:

atheist

irregular

unnatural

nonsense

impossible

Suppose a newcomer to Esperanto wanted to express these ideas. Suppose this student knew these concepts and had words for them in her native language and suppose that she knew the Esperanto for these morphemes: not, regular, God, believe, natural, sense and possible. The student could easily form these Esperanto counterparts and be instantly understood:

nediokredanto

nekutima

nenatura

nesencaĵo

neebla

Many Esperantists use ateisto for "atheist." However, the word that the student constructed, which literally means not-god-believer, is a perfectly good Esperanto word and one which everyone who knows some basic Esperanto will immediately understand.

The foreign student of English lacks this freedom. Suppose that a particular foreign student knows the English words: regular, God, believe, natural, sense, possible. Suppose further that this student has learned a number of different English prefixes which are used to express the idea of "not." These prefixes include un as in "untrue," ir as in "irresistible," im as in "immaterial" and in as in "inhumane." Suppose that this student freely combines morphemes, using their correct meanings, and comes up with these words:

irgodbeliever

unregular

imnatural

insense

unpossible

Even though these words are logically constructed out of English morphemes, they go against the rules of the language. Foreign students have to learn one-by-one the thousands of different possible combinations which are permitted, and they must be very careful not to use those which are not permitted for fear of risking censure, puzzled looks or even laughter. Since many of us are uncomfortable when people laugh at us, even when there is no malice in the laughter, the threat of laughter can act as a powerful inhibiting factor when it comes to practicing a foreign language in a real-life situation.

Months of Hard Work

Complicated national languages such as English with their tens of thousands of arbitrary rules are simply not suitable for use as a universal auxiliary international language because, except for the linguistically gifted, such languages cannot be learned in a few months of hard work. Each of these languages has its own difficulties, but all of them are so difficult that they require a great many thousands of hours to master to the point where they can be spoken and written comfortably and correctly.

As a national language, English works magnificently. People who grow up with the language and use it throughout their lives master its intricacies and display that mastery without even having to think about it. On the other hand, for the person who learns English for occasional use as an auxiliary international language, the complexities of English present an enormous superfluous extra learning load. The other great unplanned languages also work wonderfully as national languages, but they are also incredibly difficult to learn as a foreign language, each for its own reasons.

The freedom to put morphemes together to create new, instantly recognizable words is one of the reasons why Esperanto can be learned in a few months of diligent, serious study.

Before we delve more deeply into this powerful feature of Esperanto, it is important to emphasize the uniqueness of each language's way of communicating ideas.

Languages are not Codes For Each Other

There are many individuals who suffer from the misconception that other languages should be word-for-word equivalents for their own. This misconception is based on the unstated assumption that the words and expressions of a foreign language are or ought to be one-for-one equivalents for the words and expressions of their own language. Since the patterns of their own language are so natural to them, it seems reasonable to assume that these familiar patterns are natural to languages generally.

This is true for secret codes. Those who write in a certain kind of code first think out their message in their own language and then look up the equivalent for each word in a codebook. Then they write down those equivalents. If the code is a numerical one they might come up with something like this: 0973 9145 3329 6728 6651 7159 4029 1182.

The recipient of the message in turn consults a code book and turns the message back into regular words.

The problem is that anyone who tries that trick with real languages will come up with laughter-provoking sentences.

The humorist Mark Twain made use of this. He translated an item from a Mannheim Germany newspaper word-for-word into English. This is the kind of English that he came up with:

In the daybeforeyesterdayshortlyaftereleveno'clock Night, the inthistownstandingtavern called 'The Wagoner' was downburnt.

In German it is natural to use long compound words that would look very strange in English, and Twain as a humorist exploited this for laughs.

Humorists could have similar fun with Kivunjo, the African language referred to earlier, where one complex word may do the work of a six-word English sentence; or Japanese, where the verb must always come at the end of the sentence, or any other foreign language.

We could try Mark Twain's trick with another language. Here is a passage from the famous French novel, *The Three Musketeers* by Alexandre Dumas:

D'Artagnan la releva en lui passant le bras autour de la taille; mais comme il sentait à son poids qu'elle était sur le point de se trouver mal, il s'empessa de la rassurer par des protestations de dévouement.

Here's a Mark-Twainish word-for-word rendering of this passage into English:

D'Artagnan her raised in her passing the arm around of the waist; but as he felt to her weight that she was on the point of herself to find bad, he himself hastened of her toreassure by ofthe protestations of devotion.

A pattern of words that is perfectly natural in French, which was used by one of the most successful French authors, is simply ridiculous in English.

Of course a French humorist or a German humorist or a Kivunjo humorist or a Japanese humorist could have the same kind of fun by translating word-for-word some English sentence into their language. The results would be just as laughter-provoking to French or German or Kivunjo or Japanese ears.

Unlike the case with the secret code, languages are not word-for-word equivalents for each other. Each language must be taken on its own terms. A person's mother tongue, whatever it might be, is not the one true paradigm for understanding the basic nature of language. No matter how dominant a language might be in one country or even in many fields world-wide, it is just one form of language out of the many thousands that have developed.

Languages become dominant in the world not because they are learned easily but because of the dominance of the nations whose national tongues they are.

Like other languages, Esperanto has its own ways of expressing ideas. Esperanto sentences, like French or German sentences, may sound odd when translated word-for-word into English. In addition, when we analyze Esperanto words in terms of English morphemes, the results may seem odd to English ears. This does not mean that there is anything wrong with Esperanto or with English. Languages just work differently.

A Sentence by a Nobel-Prize Winning Esperantist

With this in mind, let us see how the system of combining morphemes to create new words works in practice. Let us consider a sentence taken from an interview that was held in

Esperanto. In 1994 Professor Reinhard Selten of Germany became the first Esperantist to win a Nobel Prize in a great many years when he shared in the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. Here he explains what his specialty, game theory, is:

La ludo-teorio estas matematika teorio pri konflikto kaj kunlaborado, en kiuj oni povas kunagadi, aŭ kontraŭi unu la alian, aŭ samtempe, ambaŭ.

Game theory is a mathematical theory about conflict and collaboration, in which you can act together or act against one another, or, at the same time, both.

Now here is each Esperanto word followed by its literal English meaning:

la	=	the
ludo-teorio	=	game-theory
estas	=	is
matematika	=	mathematical
teorio	=	theory
pri	=	about
konflikto	=	conflict
kaj	=	and
kunlaborado	=	with-working
en	=	in
kiuj	=	which (plural)
oni	=	one
povas	=	can
kunagadi	=	to-with-act
aŭ	=	or
kontraŭi	=	to-against
unu	=	one
alian	=	another (direct object)
samtempe	=	same-time-ly
ambaŭ =		both

Putting these words together in the manner of Mark Twain we come up with:

The game-theory is mathematical theory about conflict and withworking, in which one can towithact or toagainst one another, or sametimely both.

Analyzing this sentence can show us how Esperanto and English behave differently from each other.

One difference between the two languages is in the use of articles. In English we say "game theory" but in Selten said "la ludo-teorio" which is like saying "the game theory." On the other hand in English we speak of "a mathematical theory." Like Russian, Esperanto has no equivalent for a or an. As has already been indicated, one of the purposes of a is to indicate that a noun is coming up, and the noun-ending -o does that little job in Esperanto.

Now let us look at some specific words that Professor Selton used in this sentence which he spoke answering a question from the interviewer.

Kunlaborado

Kunlaborado is made up of four morphemes, kun, labor, ad and o.

When foreign students of English learn the English words "houseboat" and "boathouse," they learn to read them from right to left. Thus a "houseboat" is a boat that serves as a house, and a "boathouse" is a house for boats.

Let us read kunlaboro the same way. Here are the four morphemes, right to left:

The ending –o makes the word a noun.

The morpheme –ad indicates duration, that a process goes on for a while. (English does this with verbs by using a form like "she was eating" instead of simply saying "she ate.")

Esperantists can add –ad to a verb to get this effect. Esperantists can also add –ad to nouns and adverbs and adjectives to get this effect.)

The morpheme labor means "work."

The morpheme kun means "with."

We come up with this: a noun that means "work with." (Sometimes morphemes like the English a or an or the Esperanto ad are not translated.) Kunlaborado is similar in structure to the English word "collaboration." According to Webster's New World Dictionary collaboration comes from the Latin word collaboratus which is derived from two Latin words com (simplified here to co) which means "with" and labor which means "work." The final morpheme ation marks the word as a noun.

The difference here is that Esperanto speakers have the right to combine kun and labor and o simply because it makes sense. Students of English may not do this with with and work and come up with withwork or withworkation even though it would make sense. Instead they are required to use "working together" or "collaboration." As has already been stressed, foreign students of English have to learn which combinations of morphemes are permissible and which are not. In Esperanto, as long as they make sense, this kind of combination of morphemes is always permitted.

Kontraŭi

Kontraŭi is made up of the adverbial root kontraŭ, meaning "against," and the ending –i, which marks the infinitive of a verb. Kontraŭi literally means "to against."

The students of Esperanto are free to turn any word into a noun, an adjective, an adverb or a verb by simply using the appropriate ending for that kind of word.

Foreign students of English cannot say "to against" even though this might make sense. They must remember to say "to be against" or else use an entirely different word "to oppose".

The student of Esperanto is also free to say esti kontraŭ "to be against," simply because this too makes sense.

Kunagadi

Kunagadi is made up out of four morphemes, three of which we already know.

The new morpheme, ag, means "act" in the sense of doing something.

Reading kunagadi from right to left, we see that it means "to continuously act with" or, as we would say in good English, "to continuously act together."

In this case a single Esperanto word is the equivalent of a four-word English phrase.

Samtempe

Samtempe has three morphemes. Sam means "same." Temp means "time." The ending –e, like the English ending –ly, marks a word as an adverb. We may read samtempe to mean "sametimely."

Foreign students of English may not use "sametimely" but may choose between the prepositional phrase "at the same time" or a word of Latin origin, "simultaneously."

The Esperanto student can also say "at the same time" je la sama tempo because it makes sense.

Imagine if foreign students had these kinds of possibilities available to them in English. It would make English much easier for them. Of course, they do not have these possibilities. This is just another reason why English is so terribly difficult for them to learn.

The Creative Pleasure of Combining Morphemes

Let us see how Esperantists use this feature of freely combining morphemes to make their language interesting and colorful. Here are some examples taken from one of Claude Piron's detective novels which he published under the pseudonym of Johan Valano:

1. altrangulo

alt	=	high
rang	=	rank
ul	=	person, guy
o	=	[noun marker]
j	=	[plural marker]

So: altranguloj = "big shots" or "higher-ups."

2. facilanime

facil	=	easy
anim	=	soul
e	=	[adverb marker]

So: facilanime = "with an easy soul" or, as the English idiom has it, "with an easy heart."

3. kunparolantino

kun	=	with
parol	=	speak
ant	=	one who
in	=	female
o	=	[noun marker]

So: kunparolantino = "a female who is taking part in a conversation or dialogue."

Because Esperantists can freely create new words that are instantly understood, the language is very rich in synonyms. Here is a group of synonyms, all of which refer to some kind of comrade or companion:

1. kamarado

kamarad	comrade, pal
o	[noun marker]

2. kunulo

kun	=	with
ul	=	person, guy
o	=	[noun marker]

Kunulo means "companion", someone who is with somebody.

3. kuniranto

kun	=	with
ir	=	go
ant	=	one who
o	=	[noun marker]

Kuniranto means a special kind of companion, someone who is going along with someone else.

4. kunvojaĝanto

kun	=	with
vojaĝ	=	vojage, trip
ant	=	one who
o	=	[noun marker]

Kunvojaĝanto is someone who is taking a trip with someone else.

5. vojkunulo

voj	=	way, path
kun	=	with
ul	=	person,
o	=	[noun marker]

Vojkunulo is someone who is going along the same path or road or way with someone else.

6. samsortulo

sam	=	same
sort	=	fate
ul	=	person
o	=	[noun marker]

Samsortulo is someone who shares the same fate as someone else.

Such compound words are instantly understandable because they are made up of very common morphemes. Of course, no one is required to use a whole lot of synonyms, but if the need is felt, perhaps for literary purposes, to select among possible synonyms to convey fine

grades of meaning, the Esperanto system of freely combining morphemes makes this possible without requiring the student to memorize enormous numbers of individual words.

The words just given form part of a list of ten given by Claude Piron. However, as Piron points out, many more possibilities exist. Here is one that comes to mind.

Kvankam Hitler kaj Stalin estis malamikoj, ili estis samfarantoj.

Although Hitler and Stalin were enemies, they were "samfarantoj."

Now how can we translate this word, samfarantoj, into English? The components are easy enough to understand:

sam	=	same
far	=	do
ant	=	one who
o	=	[noun marker]
j	=	[plural marker]

The translation that comes to my mind is "people who do the same kinds of things." In English the sentence becomes:

Although Hitler and Stalin were enemies, they were people who did the same kinds of things.

There are other ways of expressing this in English. However, none of them that I can think of are as concise as samfarantoj.

When people speak and write their native language they quite naturally create new sentences which never existed before. Most of the words that Esperantists use are words that they have learned, but at times they spontaneously create words that are new to them.

Here is an example:

In Lancaster, Pennsylvania we were finishing up a weekend conference with a little picnic in a park. Little by little people said good-bye and left. At one point someone asked where the person who had organized the conference was. I responded, "Li altrajnis la aliajn." Three of these words are very easy to translate into English:

li	=	he
la	=	the
aliajn	=	others (direct object)

The fourth word, altrajnis, is more complex. It means, "took to the train." Here are its morphemes:

al	to
trajn	train
ig	cause
is	[past tense marker] in the past

In short, the sentence means "he caused to the train the others" or, in good English, "he took the others to the train."

Of course the English sentence "he took the others to the train" works perfectly, and I could have made up an Esperanto sentence with the equivocal words: "Li alportis la aliajn al la trajno."

Because of the flexible nature of Esperanto I could have expressed this idea in many other ways as well. Here is one more:

"Li altrajne ŝoforis ilin" means "He tottrarily drove them."

However, "Li altrajnis la aliajn" just came out of my mouth, just as the sentences that you speak in an ordinary conversation just come out of your mouth. Esperanto is a very flexible language with many different ways of expressing a thought so that the speaker or writer may select or devise the one that works best according to his taste. It is this multitude of possibilities that makes it possible for a student to be very expressive in Esperanto even though he may know only about a thousand morphemes.

Let me conclude by indicating some words I recently used in a little essay on the "soc.culture.esperanto" newsgroup of the Internet:

1. retsendas

ret	=	network
send	=	send
as	=	[present tense]

Retsendas means "send by means of the internet."

2. retsendaĵo

ret	=	network
send	=	send
aĵ	=	specific thing, concrete thing
o	=	[noun marker]

Retsendaĵo means "something sent by means of the internet" (a posting on the internet.)

3. enretigi

en	=	in
ret	=	network
ig	=	cause
i	=	[infinitive]

Enretigi means "to put in the internet." (In English we would usually say "to put on the internet." Different languages use prepositions differently. This feature of languages is gone into in Chapter 15.)

4. nurangleleganto

nur	=	only
angl	=	English
e	=	[adverb marker]
leg	=	read
ant	=	one who

o = [noun marker]

Nurangleleganto means "someone who reads only English."

5. informpetanto

inform = information
pet = request
ant = one who
o = [noun marker]

Informpetanto means "someone who requests information."

6. mondkalas

mond = world
skal = scale
as = [present tense]

Mondskalas means "operates on a world-wide scale."

I did not remember having seen any of these words before. (Of course they all might have been used before.) The point is that because I knew their component morphemes, I was able to spontaneously come up with these words. Because of the rules of word-formation in Esperanto I did not have to worry about checking through dictionaries to see if the words were "good Esperanto" or not. As a speaker of a language which was specifically designed to be easily learned for international use, I have a right to make up such words.

The situation is quite different in English. While writing an earlier part of this chapter the English word illogicity came into my mind. After writing it down I wondered if it was a valid English word. I knew my readers would understand it, but I also knew that I had no right to use it unless it was an established English word.

First I checked in an excellent college dictionary. It was not there.

Then I looked in the Oxford English Dictionary. This greatest of all English dictionaries told me that the Daily Telegraph had used illogicity in 1886. It was an established English word. I had the right to use it.

The same natural process which all competent English speakers use when they speak their language is used by Esperantists when they speak theirs. The difference is that the English speaker only has the right to use this process freely in creating sentences. The Esperantist also has the right to use this process in creating new words.

In the last chapter we learned that native speakers of English enjoy a vast array of idiomatic expressions with which they can express their thoughts.

Those foreign students of English who have only several hundreds of hours to devote to the study of the language can only make use of a limited number of these expressions. For this reason and because of the other complexities of the language, most foreign students can only hope to learn English to a rudimentary degree.

With a similar investment of time students of Esperanto can become sophisticated users of the language because they enjoy the freedom to create new, colorful, apt words out of whatever morphemes, out of whatever "little words," they choose to use.

Such students discover that Esperanto is a very expressive language indeed.

Chapter Twelve

The Pattern-making Power of the Human Mind

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This is the twelfth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village*. by Sylvan Zaft.

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The human mind naturally recognizes and applies patterns. It naturally groups objects into categories.

For a long time a children's educational television program made use of these powers in a feature in which the little children who watched the program were asked, "Which of these is not like the others?"

They were shown pictures of four objects and were asked to figure out which one did not belong with the other three. Here are some typical examples:

- | | | | | |
|----|----------|-------|----------|-----------|
| 1. | fork | knife | mouse | spoon |
| 2. | elephant | rose | dog | tiger |
| 3. | car | canoe | sailboat | steamship |

Even small children who cannot read yet can figure out some of these. They can pick out mouse as not belonging with fork, knife and spoon; and rose as not belonging with elephant, dog and tiger.

This ability to recognize which items go together and which items do not, which items share pertinent similarities and which items do not is essential to human thinking. When my own children were very young I would give them little puzzles like the ones presented above. I also gave them little analogy questions, giving them three items and asking them to tell me what the fourth item might be. You are probably familiar with this kind of question from standardized tests. An analogy question on a school test might be:

Paris : France :: London : ?

From a number of possible answers the student is expected to select "England" because just as Paris is the capital of France, so London is the capital of England.

In school we were taught to read such questions as:

Paris is to France as London is to what?

With my little children I left out the connecting words and just clearly pronounced the first two words as a pair, then the third, and then I stopped and looked expectantly at them:

Hair Dog Feathers ???

Even when they were quite small, too young yet to read, they could come up with an answer like "bird."

Here are some more examples of similar questions which are suitable for very young children:

Grass Green Sky _____ ?

Shoes Feet Gloves _____?

Airplane Sky Boat _____?

My children, more often than not, would come up with a suitable answer. They could do this because the human mind comes equipped with the ability to group things together as being like each other. It comes equipped with the ability to determine what other things are not like these things. The word for these abilities is "categorizing." Children can do this because the human mind has the power to detect a relationship in one case and look for the same relationship in another case. The word for this ability is "analogizing."

Thus the little child knows that the relationship between shoes and feet is that the first goes on the second. She easily applies it to gloves and the blank space. She thinks, "Shoes go on feet and gloves go on ????" And, of course, she comes up with "hands."

Young children automatically apply this inborn power that appears very early in their lives to the language which they hear spoken around them. They naturally come up with and apply regular patterns. Young children who grow up where English is the language spoken around them hear phrases like:

I laugh	I laughed
I cry	I cried
I play	I played

And then they create their own. After hearing "I drink," they come up with "I drank" and after hearing "I paint," they come up with "I painted." This is just the normal way that the human mind works. You see a pattern; you apply the pattern.

A More Natural Language

The problem that makes learning English somewhat difficult for children and very difficult for foreign students of the language is that you can just apply the patterns sometimes. Unfortunately, there is no power of the mind that can tell the child or the foreign student when the patterns apply and when they do not. Each variation must be learned individually and because there are at least tens of thousands of variations, it takes a very long time indeed to learn English. (The same, of course, goes for other languages such as French, German, Arabic, Russian etc.)

One day I was playing with my granddaughter who was then five years old. She held up an uninflated toy balloon and said, "Grandpa, do you remember when you blew this up and

holded it and let it go? And then it made a funny noise!" Another day she said, about a certain game, "It's funner with three."

This is a perfectly natural way for a five-year-old to talk. She is applying the pattern of "laugh / laughed" and "play / played" to "blow" and "hold." She is applying the pattern of "big / bigger" and "fast / faster" to "fun." Eventually people will tell her that saying things like "you blowed this up and holded it" and "It's funner with three" is bad English. It is often bad English to perceive a pattern and apply it regularly. That is what makes languages like English so incredibly difficult for foreign students to master.

Even someone who is not a young child may make this kind of mistake. I once heard a woman in advanced old age say when she was very tired, "She knew that my thigh hurted me."

The above examples relate to the past tense of verbs. Young children do the same kind of thing with other parts of the language such as plurals. They hear:

one dog	two dogs
one fork	two forks
one apple	two apples

And they easily come up with these correct plurals:

one cat	two cats
one spoon	two spoons
one banana	two bananas

Of course, applying the pattern, they also come up with these incorrect plurals:

one tooth	two tooths
one goose	two geoses
one child	two childs

Everyone understands them. Perhaps someone says, "Isn't it cute, the way little Susie talks?" Later little Susie will be taught to speak correctly, to say such things as:

I eat I ate
I draw I drew
I sit I sat

and

one tooth	two teeth
one goose	two geese
one child	two children

As has already been pointed out this is an unnatural way of talking in the sense that this is not the way the human mind naturally works. In this sense, English, like French and Russian and Arabic and so many other languages, is unnatural. It is artificial. English usage often conflicts with the natural forms of speech which spontaneously arise in the human mind due to the

inborn powers which we all have of perceiving regularities and extending them to new situations.

Students who learn Esperanto can always apply a perceived pattern with full confidence that it is correct. Because Esperanto permits its users to employ the natural pattern-forming power of the human mind it is in this important sense a more natural language than English or French or Russian or Arabic or just about any other language you care to name.

Esperanto makes full use of this great patterning power of the human mind, a power with which the mind of every child and every student of language comes equipped. Because Esperanto is more natural in this way, it can be learned far more rapidly than other languages.

In one sense of artificial Esperanto is artificial. In this sense, something is artificial if it is "deliberately planned or devised or developed by a person or people." In this sense Esperanto is as artificial as algebra, automobiles, houses, chairs, books, computers, chess, baseball, airplanes, wedding ceremonies and apple pie. It has been suggested that Esperanto is an artificial language in the same way that an automobile is an artificial horse.

Because students of Esperanto may consistently apply the patterns they perceive, every time they learn a new root, a new main verb, they automatically know ten or twenty or more other words. Because of this feature of the language, students who have learned a number of basic morphemes, a task that can be completed in a few weeks, can expand their vocabulary by 1000 or more words every time they learn just 100 new roots.

(Note: This chapter is based on ideas presented by Claude Piron in *Le défi des langues*.)

Chapter Thirteen

One Word-Many Words

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I am now going to learn a new Esperanto root. Please excuse me for a moment while I go and read something in Esperanto. When I find a root the meaning of which I do not know, I will look it up in the dictionary and come right back. Please wait.

There! That didn't take too long, I hope. The new root I just learned is *ljam*, Esperanto for that long-necked four-footed animal known in English and Spanish as "llama." Now I only need to add the noun ending *-o*, and there is a new Esperanto word I have learned, *ljam**o*, meaning "llama" or "a llama."

In fact, as an experienced Esperantist, I have learned twenty-two new words, because I am free to combine the root *ljam* with other common morphemes, such as prefixes and suffixes, which I already know. Thus, I already know, without having to look them up, what the young of the llama are called, what the males are called, what the females are called, what the place where they are kept is called, what the people who keep them are called and so on. Here are the twenty-two new words I know automatically once I have learned the new root *ljam*.

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. | <i>vir</i> <i>ljam</i> <i>o</i> | = | male llama |
| 2. | <i>ljam</i> <i>in</i> <i>o</i> | = | female llama |
| 3. | <i>ljam</i> <i>id</i> <i>o</i> | = | a young llama |
| 4. | <i>ljam</i> <i>ej</i> <i>o</i> | = | place where llamas are kept |
| 5. | <i>ljam</i> <i>ist</i> <i>o</i> | = | someone who takes care of llamas |
| 6. | <i>ljam</i> <i>e</i> | = | like a llama, as in the sentence
"Ŝi kraĉas <i>ljam</i> <i>e</i> " which means "She spits like a llama." |
| 7. | <i>ljam</i> <i>a</i> | = | (the adjective form) llama, as in
" <i>ljam</i> <i>a</i> nutraĵo" which means "llama food." |

8.	ljami	=	to act like a llama as in "Tiu ulo ljamas marŝante." This means "That guy acts like a llama when he walks" or, in more concise English, "That guy walks like a llama."
9.	ljam-amanto	=	llama-lover
10.	ljambredisto	=	llama breeder
11.	ljamposedanto	=	llama owner
12.	ljamaĵo	=	llama meat
13.	ljamolando	=	the land of the llamas (This could be a name for the country they come from or from their country in a children's story or a fable.)
14.	ljamreĝo	=	king of the llamas (in a story)
15.	ljamreĝidoj	=	the children of the llama king
16.	ljammortigulo	=	llama killer
17.	ljamego	=	a giant llama
18.	ljamegino	=	a giant female llama
19.	ljameto	=	a dwarf llama
20.	ljamaĉe	=	like a rotten llama
21.	ljamigi	=	to turn (someone) into a llama, as in "La malbonega sorĉisto ljamigis sian malamikon." This means "The evil wizard turned his enemy into a llama."
22.	ljamiganto	=	someone who turns someone into a llama or who creates a llama (as Dr. Frankenstein created the famous monster)
23.	ljamiĝi	=	to become a llama, as in "Antaŭ multege da jaroj la praljamoj finfine ljamiĝis." This means "An enormous number of years ago the ancestors of the llamas finally became llamas."
24.	ljameco	=	the quality of being a llama

Whoops! I went too far. I did not stop at number twenty-two. It appears that I do not just know twenty-two words automatically but twenty-four. I will have to be careful or I will start thinking up more words.

Actually there is no definite limit to the number of new words I automatically know every time I learn a new Esperanto root. This is one of the main reasons why Esperanto is such a powerful language even for those who only know, say, 1000 morphemes. Whenever they learn a new

morpheme, they are automatically able to produce ten or twenty or thirty or however many new words. That is why there can be no definite answer to the question, "How many words are there in Esperanto?"

Some of my ljamovortoj (llama words) are of use only to someone making up a fable about llamas. However, in practice, many of these words are very useful, such as the words for the male, the female, the young, the place for keeping the animals and, perhaps, meat from the animal.

Foreign students of English are not always so lucky. They have to separately learn these various words. They have to learn that the young of a horse is called a "colt" and the young of a chicken is called a "chick," and so on.

Let us look at tables for some terms in English and then for the same terms in Esperanto which list the male of animals, the female of animals, the young of animals, and so forth.

Before I do this, I want to emphasize that there is nothing wrong with English because it has so many individual words to learn. It is not a big problem for native speakers of English to learn these words. Distinctive words, such as those which we will find on the table below, provide a sense of individuality and a richness of vocabulary which certainly gives a particular texture to the language. However, if someone has only a limited amount of time in which to learn an international auxiliary language, this kind of rich unpatterned vocabulary makes for a big overload. It is similar to the overload which the foreign student of Indonesian experiences having to learn all of the fascinating and rich nuances of the you-system or the overload which the student of Cantonese experiences in learning the different tones in which words are spoken.

Here is the table, first in English and then in Esperanto:

English Terms

	Animal	Male	Female	Young	Place	Meat
1.	horse	stallion	mare	colt	stable	horse meat
2.	pig	boar	sow	piglet	pigsty	pork
3.	chicken	rooster	hen	chick	coop	chicken
4.	sheep	ram	ewe	lamb	sheepcote	mutton, lamb
5.	goat	billy goat	nanny goat	kid	???	goat meat
6.	dog	male dog	bitch	puppy	kennel	dog meat
7.	cat	tomcat	???	kitten	???	cat meat
8.	cattle	bull	cow	calf	stable	beef, veal

Esperanto Terms

	Animal	Male	Female	Young	Place	Meat
1.	ĉevalo	virĉevalo	ĉevalino	ĉevalido	ĉevalejo	ĉevalaĵo
2.	porko	virporko	porkino	porkido	porkejo	porkaĵo
3.	koko	virkoko	kokino	kokido	kokejo	kokaĵo
4.	ŝafo	virŝafo	ŝafino	ŝafido	ŝafejo	ŝafaĵo
5.	kapro	virkapro	kaprino	kaprido	kaprejo	kapraĵo
6.	hundo	virhundo	hundino	hundido	hundejo	hundaĵo
7.	kato	virkato	katino	katido	katejo	kataĵo
8.	bovo	virbovo	bovino	bovido	bovejo	bovaĵo

Please take a moment to go down the columns of terms from top to bottom in both charts.

Thank you. No doubt you noticed a big difference between an Esperanto column and its English counterpart. Which columns do you think a student could learn more easily?

If the regularity of Esperanto were confined merely to one or two features of the language, perhaps it would have a limited importance. However, since regularities are found very commonly in Esperanto and since this kind of patterning is so inconsistent in English and similar tongues, this means that a good working knowledge of Esperanto can be acquired in a year or a year and a half, depending on students' linguistic background, whereas after the same period of time, foreign students of English or other languages are still very much in the introductory stage of learning. Already reasonably diligent students of Esperanto can read, write and speak in a normal way. The main problem that remains is adding vocabulary as needed. Students of English are still coping with the irregularities and the idioms of the language. Five years later they will still be coping with the irregularities and the idioms of the language.

In constructing the English table I had to check out some terms even though I am a native speaker of English with three college degrees and even though I have taught English professionally. I did not have to check out any of the terms in Esperanto. I wrote them down as fast as my fingers could move.

Once I learned, as a beginning student, the meanings of the following prefixes and suffixes, I could apply them to any new root I came across, including "ljam." Here are the prefixes and suffixes used to create the Esperanto table:

vir-	=	male
-in	=	female
-id	=	young
-ej	=	place
-aĵ	=	something made out of something else, such as food that comes from a certain source

There are synonyms for a few of the terms on the Esperanto table. For instance "taŭro" is another word which means "virbovo." Instead of "ĉevalejo" you can say "stalo" which means "stable." However, if you do not know "stalo," you are not out of luck. If you know "ĉeval" and "ejo" you can simply put them together and come up with a fine, literate, perfectly acceptable word. Students of English are not permitted to do that and come up with "horseplace" even though everyone knows what they are saying.

A process similar to that which I applied to ljam can be applied to any new root. The only requirement is that the resulting words make sense.

Chapter Fourteen

Can Feelings be Expressed in Esperanto?

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I once attended a small Esperanto weekend conference in eastern Pennsylvania. Esperantists came from such states as California, Arizona, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maryland and New York. The age range of the people who attended was from three years old to retirement age.

During this conference I met another retiree. Although we were both native born Americans, we spoke in Esperanto with each other throughout this Esperanto conference. We not only conveyed a lot of information to each other but we also wound up sharing experiences which had affected us deeply. We spoke about family tragedies. In the course of two or three days we spoke of those kinds of losses which bring tears to the eyes. We also shared other kinds of experiences, experiences that made us break out laughing.

I have had this kind of experience before. Perhaps the fact that we were using a language that we learned for idealistic reasons brought out a side of our personality, our character, our soul, that we would have been a little more loathe to reveal had we been speaking English. I can't be certain. What I am certain of is that we were both deeply moved by meeting each other, that we both learned a great deal about each other, and that our lives are richer for having known each other over a period of time that can be measured in hours.

During the same conference I had a long talk (in Esperanto, of course) with a student at one of our country's leading universities. We went into questions of the meaning of life, the kind of questions that led me when I was a young man to the study of philosophy. We discussed these themes for an hour or an hour and a half after the evening session ended. Words flowed as readily as they would have in English. If we did not know a word we needed, a word came to us made up out of the little words, the morphemes, which we already knew.

Years ago I drove a visitor from China who knew no English a few hundred miles from Chicago to Detroit. In Esperanto, the only language we shared, she told me about her concerns about her son. Years ago a world-famous Esperantist stayed with me for a few weeks and, in the course of talking about a great many topics, we too shared tragedies and the near-tragedies that had wrenched our lives.

There are people who know next-to-nothing about Esperanto and dismiss it out of hand as not being a real language, whatever they mean by "a real language." The philosophical term *a priori* means "before checking out the facts about something." Such people state *a priori* that Esperanto is not a language in which you can express deep feelings, that it is not a language in

which you can do philosophical analysis, and so on. There is no way to argue with them. People cannot be made to see what they are determined not to see.

If I were to say that I have discussed philosophy in Esperanto, such people would scoff. If I were to say that I have been brought to the verge of tears when others have shared the tragedies of their lives while speaking Esperanto, they would act as though I were suffering from some kind of delusion. If I were to describe how a man and a woman who did not speak each other's native languages met at an international Esperanto gathering, came to know each other and love each other, got married and raise children, all while speaking Esperanto with each other, such people would either ignore me or smile at what they would consider to be my fantasy.

These a priori thinkers set up logical structures and deduce from them all kinds of reasons why Esperanto cannot work. They remind me of the people who proved with irrefutable logic that human beings could never construct heavier-than-air flying machines. The logic of such people is perfect. If you grant their assumptions, then their conclusions necessarily follow. The only catch is that the conclusions which stem from their perfect logic are based on assumptions which are not true.

There is another term in philosophy, a posteriori. This means "after checking out the facts." Sometimes scientists make up wonderful, sophisticated theories which explain the known facts. They rigorously construct these theories. Their logic is perfect. Teachers and professors expound upon the theories in schools and universities all over the world. There is no a priori reason to suspect that there is anything wrong with the theories.

But then some investigator uncovers new facts. These facts do not fit the theory. Long ago the prevailing theory was that everything in the heavens revolves around the earth. That theory was elaborate and consistent and it fit all the known facts. It was universally accepted. But then people looked closely at the heavens. Hearing of the Dutch invention of a new device to see distance objects, Galileo Galilei built the first telescope used for astronomical purposes. He looked at the wandering star named Jupiter and found that four moons were revolving around it and not around the earth. This finding conflicted with the theory that everything in the heavens goes around the earth.

There was nothing wrong a priori with the old theory. However, it turned out that there was a great deal wrong with it a posteriori. In the course of the centuries great institutions which held tenaciously to the old theory that everything in the heavens revolves around the earth finally had to give it up. The only alternative was to look foolish by supporting a theory that conflicted with a whole panoply of well-established facts.

Similarly all of those who argue that Esperanto is, in a very bad sense, an artificial language without a soul (unlike English, Latin, Swahili, Indonesian and Sioux), that it cannot be used to create works of literature or convey deep feelings, such people tenaciously hold on to their a priori positions about Esperanto. They can do so as long as they do not look at the facts.

I myself was not on the moon when Neil Armstrong took his first step there. I myself was not in Rome when Julius Caesar was stabbed to death. I myself was not at Auschwitz when the Germans used hydrocyanic gas to kill enormous numbers of Jews and other members of what they considered to be inferior races. Yet I have good knowledge about these events. That knowledge is based on evidence such as films, photographs and eye-witness accounts. I know that those events happened just as I know that my father married my mother, even though I was not there.

In the same way I know that people read books in Indonesian, that they speak in Indonesian, that they make love and argue while speaking Indonesian, and so on. I know this even though I have never seen an Indonesian book or heard a word of Indonesian.

There are people who have no problem accepting all of these facts about Indonesian (or about any other of the thousands of languages used around the world) but who refuse to accept them about Esperanto. They hold a priori positions and, as such, their positions are irrefutable, even though those positions are not in accord with the facts.

In spite of the a priori opponents of Esperanto, the language works very well, not as a copy of some other language, but in its own way. You can do anything in Esperanto that you can do in any other language. The difference is that it does not take long years of study to get to the point where you can do it.

Chapter Fifteen

A Minor Difficulty of Esperanto

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Among the early responses to Zamenhof's plan for an international language were a number of proposals to change the language. One writer objected to Zamenhof's word, *kaj*, which means "and." (*Kaj* rhymes with the English word, "my.") This writer insisted that Zamenhof use the Latin "et" instead. If Zamenhof did so, then the writer promised to learn the new language.

Zamenhof's comment on this request was that the word *kaj* was not arbitrarily invented but taken from Greek. The reason why Zamenhof rejected "et" was that "et" already had the meaning of "very small" in Esperanto. (In the form *-ette*, it has this meaning in English in words like "kitchenette" and "dinetette.") Zamenhof could not possibly have changed his plan in order to suit each person's desires. This was because different individuals had conflicting desires. Zamenhof did the next best thing. After a few years he put the main proposals for reform up to a vote of the Esperanto community. He neither argued for nor against the proposals. He merely said that he would abide by the community's wishes. The Esperanto community voted to reject the changes.

One of the changes that had been proposed was to do away with the agreement between adjective and noun. In Esperanto, as in English, nouns have a singular form and a plural form. English normally adds *-s* to form the plural of a noun. Esperanto always adds *-j* for this purpose.

Here are some examples:

elefanto	elefantoj
aŭtomobilo	aŭtomobiloj
planedo	planedoj

Now let us put the word for "big" in front of each of these nouns. We get:

granda elefanto	grandaj elefantoj
granda aŭtomobilo	grandaj aŭtomobiloj
granda planedo	grandaj planedoj

The Esperanto adjective takes the plural ending *-j* just as the noun does. The same kind of thing occurs in French as well as many other languages.

English treats adjectives in a simpler way. They never change their form. They stay the same whether they come before singular nouns or whether they come before plural nouns:

a big elephant	big elephants
a big automobile	big automobiles
a big planet	big planets

Here we have a complexity in Esperanto that does not exist in English. It is not a very big complexity. After only a few minutes of practice the students acquire the habit of adding -j to the adjective whenever they add -j to the noun. Since there are no exceptions to this rule, it is fairly easy to apply.

Is there any justification for this small but real extra learning burden which the student of Esperanto has?

First of all it should be pointed out that English has a little complexity when it comes to adjectives and the nouns which they modify that Esperanto does not. In English we are required to put adjectives in front of the noun. We say, "I voted for an intelligent candidate" but we may not say "I voted for a candidate intelligent." In Esperanto, because the endings tell us which word is an adjective and which word is a noun, we can place the adjective after the noun for emphasis whenever we like. We can say either "Mi voĉdonis por inteligenta kandidato" or "Mi voĉdonis por kandidato inteligenta."

Let us now consider the original question and see if we can find any benefit in making adjectives agree with the nouns which they modify. Let us see if there is a reasonable cost-benefit ratio regarding this minor feature of the language.

Claude Piron suggests that there is. His native French, like a great many other languages, has this same kind of agreement between subject and adjective, if not in spoken French, at least in the written form of the language. He claims that this feature, which French shares with Esperanto (as well as a great many other languages,) enables these languages to be clear in certain situations where English, lacking this tool, is unclear.

Piron gives this example from his days as a reviser of translations at the World Health Organization:

He could not agree with the amendments to the draft resolution proposed by the delegation of India. (Piron, *Le defi des langues*, p. 242)

At first glance a native speaker of English has no problem with this sentence. However, as Piron points out, the sentence as written is unclear about what the delegation of India proposed. Did the delegation propose (a) the draft resolution to which someone else offered amendments or did it propose (b) the amendments to the draft resolution? There is a big substantive difference between (a) proposing a resolution and (b) proposing amendments to that resolution. The English sentence is unclear regarding this vital distinction.

No doubt the writer felt that he was being clear when he wrote this sentence. If he had written this sentence in either French or Esperanto, he would have had to be clear because in those sentences the adjective "proposed" would have been singular if it modified "resolution", which is a singular noun, and plural if it modified "amendments," which is a plural noun.

In Esperanto the adjective which corresponds to "proposed" is *proponita* in the singular and *proponitaj* in the plural. If what was proposed by the Indian delegation were the amendments

(plural) then the word *proponitaj* (plural) would have been used. If what was proposed by the Indian delegation was the resolution (singular), then *proponita* (singular) would have been used.

This may seem a bit complex. However, languages are used for many important ends and one of them is fashioning legally binding contracts and treaties. If the language in a contract or a treaty is ambiguous where it could have been clear, serious consequences can result. People and companies can lose considerable sums of money. Nations can wind up with very serious international disputes. In rare cases such disputes could conceivably lead to military action.

The rule that calls for the agreement between noun and adjective is a rule that is simple to learn and simple to apply. Because there are no exceptions to this rule, the extra learning load is very small. The benefit will, on occasion, be extremely valuable. Therefore the cost-benefit ratio is a reasonable one. This may be why the early users of Esperanto voted to keep this feature of the language.

Esperanto is not a perfect language. It cannot be perfect for everyone for it is a language whose structure was decided by a majority vote of the users of the language. Some individuals may approve of a particular feature of the language. Others may not. If we were to decide wait until a language were devised to suit every single individual's choice, we would wait forever. Choosing to keep the feature of having agreement between noun and adjective was a reasonable choice, as the above analysis shows. Unless we are to invite linguistic chaos by changing every feature that someone objects to, it makes good sense to keep the agreement between noun and adjective.

Chapter Sixteen

A Major Difficulty of Esperanto

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There is one feature of Esperanto which creates a considerable learning load for many students. They have to spend some time practicing the use of the ending *-n* which is often referred to as "the accusative ending."

The *-n* ending has three uses in Esperanto.

I The *-n* ending indicates the DIRECT OBJECT

The most common use of the accusative ending, *-n*, is to indicate the direct object of a verb.

Some verbs are said to be intransitive. If I say, "He laughed," you don't ask, "What did he laugh?" He just laughed. The action just happened. "He laughed" is a complete sentence all by itself.

Some verbs are said to be transitive. If I say, "He chased," you expect me to go on and say what or whom he chased. Until you do so, you do not have a complete sentence. "He chased" is not a sentence but only a fragment of a sentence. You need to add a direct object, that which was chased, as in the complete sentence, "He chased the thief."

In English, we use word order to tell who did the chasing (the subject of the sentence) and who or what was chased (the direct object of the sentence.) We give the subject, the one doing the chasing, first; the verb, second; and the object, the one that was chased, third. Because of this feature, English is called an SVO (subject-verb-object) language:

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Dog	bites	man.

Because the key element in English is word order, if we change the word order we drastically change the meaning of the sentence. Because these two sentences have different word orders, they have different meanings:

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Dog	bites	man.
SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Man	bites	dog.

Many languages use some other word order to indicate which word is the subject and which word is the object. Japanese is one of a very large number of languages that puts the verb last. It is a SOV (subject-object-verb) language. Other languages put the verb first. These are VSO (verb-subject-object) languages. There are even a few languages which put the subject last. These are OVS (object-verb-subject) languages.

(Note: Daniel Pinker, *The Language Instinct*, William Morrow and Company, New York, 1994, pp. 234-235.)

Then there is an entirely different kind of language which does not use word order to indicate the subject and the object. This kind of language uses different grammatical markers, such as endings, to identify the subject and the object. One well-known language of this kind is Latin. Here are two Latin sentences which mean exactly the same thing. Even though the word order in these two sentences are quite different, they both mean: "Man bites dog."

SUBJECT	OBJECT	VERB
Homo	canem	mordet.
OBJECT	SUBJECT	VERB
Canem	homo	mordet.

"Dog" in Latin is "canis" when it is the subject. It becomes "canem" when it is the object of the action. In the same way, "man" in Latin is "homo" when it is the subject, but "man" becomes "hominem" when it is the object of the action.

Here are two further sentences. Each of these sentences mean: "Dog bites man."

SUBJECT	OBJECT	VERB
Canis	hominem	mordet.
OBJECT	SUBJECT	VERB
Hominem	canis	mordet

In Latin, as we have seen, "canis" becomes "canem" when it serves as the direct object. Here Latin turns –is to –em. In Latin "homo" becomes "hominem" when it serves as the direct object. Here Latin turns –o to inem.

Esperanto uses the same method that Latin uses in order to indicate the direct object of a sentence. However, unlike Latin, it always does so in the same way.

In Esperanto all nouns take the ending –o. Esperanto adds an –n in order to create the direct object. Thus "hundo" means "dog" and "hundon" means "dog" as a direct object. The corresponding words for human being are homo and homon.

Here are four Esperanto sentences, each of which means: "Man bites dog." (Man here is used in the generic sense of "human being.")

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Homo	mordas	hundon
OBJECT	SUBJECT	VERB
Hundon	homo	mordas
VERB	SUBJECT	OBJECT
Mordas	homo	hundon

VERB	OBJECT	SUBJECT
Mordas	hundon	homo

Here are four Esperanto sentences, each of which means "Dog bites man."

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Hundo	mordas	homon.
OBJECT	SUBJECT	VERB
Homon	hundo	mordas.
VERB	SUBJECT	OBJECT
Mordas	hundo	homon.
VERB	OBJECT	SUBJECT
Mordas	homon	hundo.

There is a big advantage to this system of indicating the direct object by means of an ending. Speakers or writers can put any term they wish at the beginning of the sentence in order to emphasize its importance. In the subject-object-verb system of English, speakers or writers cannot rearrange the elements of an English sentence in this way without altering the meaning of the sentence.

If Esperantists want to emphasize, for instance, that a man is biting a dog, they could say, "Mordas homo hundon." If they want to emphasize the fact that it is a dog that is being bitten, they could say, "Hundon homo mordas." And so on.

The accusative ending *-n* gives users of Esperanto enormous flexibility in word order. By following a single, rigid rule (Add *-n* to a noun that is used as a direct object) Esperantists gain tremendous freedom in arranging words to suit their taste and their goals in communication.

A second benefit of this direct object ending is that people who learn Esperanto can start out by using the same word order they have used in their native tongue. Let us take as an example the very simple sentence, "I love you." The English word order for this particular sentence is SVO. The French word order for this particular sentence is SOV. ("Je t'aime.")

An English speaker learning Esperanto can naturally (and correctly) say, "I love you":

SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Mi	amas	vin.

A French speaker learning Esperanto can naturally (and correctly) say, "Je t'aime" (I you love):

SUBJECT	OBJECT	VERB
Mi	vin	amas.

These are two benefits of using the accusative ending *-n* to indicate the direct object: (a) great flexibility in word order which enables users of the language to emphasize whichever element they want to and (b) the ability of new learners of the language to use the same kind of word order that they are accustomed to use when speaking their native tongue.

A third benefit is even more crucial than these two. Using the accusative to indicate the direct object promotes clarity. When people who speak dozens or hundreds of different native tongues use a common international language to communicate with each other, they are using a language in which they have relatively limited experience. I have now been working with Esperanto over a period of ten years. During that time I estimate that I have spent four thousand hours or so with this language. I have spent a reasonable amount of time speaking

Esperanto and a great deal more time writing and reading in it. I calculate that over a period of forty-five years I have spent some seven thousand hours with French, mainly in reading the language. However, this time spent on these two languages is only a very tiny fraction of the time I have spent using English, my native language, reading, writing, speaking and dreaming in it. It is reasonable to estimate that I have spent 6000 hours a year using English for, let us say, sixty of my first sixty-two years. This comes out to some 360,000 hours. This is an enormous amount of experience with English. Look at this comparison:

Language	Hours of experience	Percentage of hours
English	360,000	97%
French	7,000	2%
Esperanto	4,000	1%
All	371,000	100%

Naturally my English is far better than either my French or my Esperanto. Because of the enormous amount of time I have spent speaking, listening, writing, reading, dreaming and thinking in English, I can catch the subtleties of the language, I can figure out what is being said by the context, I can compensate for the mispronunciation of poor speakers of the language and know what they are saying.

Suppose students do not spend tens or hundreds of thousands of hours with a language that is being used for international communication but only hundreds of hours. They will not have anywhere near the familiarity with the language that native speakers of a language have. It makes sense to use little invariable grammatical markers to let them know beyond any doubt which words are adjectives, which are adverbs, which are verbs, which are nouns and which are nouns that are being used as direct objects.

Gaston Waringhien gives a number of sentences in his native French which he uses to show how sentences can be taken in two senses. French, like English, uses only word order to indicate which nouns are the direct objects in sentences. If we translate many of Waringhien's sentences into English, the same difficulty remains. Here are two of these sentences, translated into English or slightly adapted, along with others which Waringhien translated from other unplanned languages which, like English and French, do not have a grammatical marker for the direct object:

(Note: Gaston Warienghien, *Lingvo kaj Vivo*, Universala Esperanto-Asocio, Rotterdam, 1989, pp. 135-137.)

Faithful or not, he loved her.

Smith insulted the president more violently than the previous speaker.

These sentences are ambiguous in English. Each of these sentences may mean either one of two things because there is no marker to indicate the direct object. For instance, the first sentence is ambiguous because it is not clear whether it is the man or the woman who may or may not be faithful. (This is no trivial matter. It makes a lot of difference whether the writer is claiming that one individual or the other may be unfaithful.)

Let us see how the English sentences are ambiguous and how the Esperanto sentences cannot be ambiguous:

1 (English). The English sentence Faithful or not, he loved her could mean either of these:

He loved her whether he was faithful to her or not.

[In this case faithful modifies the subject, he, who might be faithful or not.]

He loved her even though she might not have been faithful to him.

[In this case faithful modifies the direct object, her, a woman who might be faithful or not.]

In English the context will often make the meaning clear, at least for native speakers who have hundreds of thousands of hours of experience with the language. In English conversation, the tone of the speaker's voice will often make the meaning clear. But for the foreigner who has just had a few hundred hours to spend with the language it is very helpful and often crucial to have a little marker that tells which word is the direct object.

The corresponding sentences in Esperanto would be clear to someone with just a few hundred hours of experience with the language because the presence or absence of the accusative ending -n would make the matter clear. This is how it would work in Esperanto:

1a (Esperanto) The Esperanto sentence *Fidela aŭ ne, li amis ŝin* means that he was the one who may have been faithful or not.

This is because both *fidela* and *li* are what was loving, i.e. are part of the subject (because these words do not have the direct object n-ending.)

1b. (Esperanto) The Esperanto sentence *Fidelan aŭ ne, li amis ŝin* means that he loved her whether she was faithful or not.

This is because both *fidelan* and *ŝin* are what is loved, i.e. are part of the direct object (because both of these words have the direct object n-ending.)

The second sentence provides a more sophisticated example of how Esperanto avoids the ambiguity of English:

2 (English). The English sentence, *Smith insulted the president more violently than the previous speaker could mean either of these:*

Smith insulted the president more violently than the previous speaker had insulted the president.

[In this case speaker is a subject, someone who has also dealt out insults to the previous speaker.]

Smith insulted the president more violently than Smith had insulted the previous speaker.

[In this case speaker is a direct object, someone who has been insulted both by the previous speaker and by Smith.]

In Esperanto if the previous speaker was doing the insulting (i.e. was a subject) the Esperanto words for the previous speaker, *"la antaŭa parolanto"*, would not have the n-ending:

2a. (Esperanto) The sentence *Smith insultis la prezidenton pli krude ol la antaŭa parolanto* can only mean that the previous speaker also insulted the president.

In Esperanto if the previous speaker was another person who was insulted by Smith, the Esperanto words for the previous speaker, *"la antaŭa parolanto"*, would take the direct object n-ending:

2b. (Esperanto) The sentence *Smith insultis la prezidenton pli krude ol la antaŭan parolanton* can only mean that the previous speaker was also the object of Smith's insults. The fact that *la antaŭan parolanton* was the object is clearly indicated by the direct object n-ending.

In both these sentences prezidenton with its n-ending is clearly the direct object. In the first sentence antaŭa parolanto is a second subject. In the second antaŭan parolanton is a second direct object.

Umberto Eco, the Italian semiotician has praised Esperanto as a masterpiece. He points out that Zamenhof often chose to make the grammar of his language more powerful rather than settling for a less effective simplicity. As an example of this, Eco points to the accusative ending.

(Note: Umberto Eco "Eko per Eco", Heroldo de Esperanto No. 1937, 20 majo 1997.)

II The -n ending indicates DIRECTION

Consider this English sentence:

1. The child jumps on the bed.

In this form the sentence is ambiguous. It can mean either that the child was already on the bed and is in the process of jumping on it or that the child was not on the bed but jumped onto it.

Esperanto makes this distinction clear by means of the accusative ending -n. Here are the sentences in Esperanto:

1. La infano saltas sur la lito.

(The child was already on the bed. Now the child is jumping on it.)

2. La infano saltas sur la liton.

(The child was not on the bed. He is jumping onto it.)

Here are some other examples:

1. La infano marŝas en la domo.

("The child is walking in the house." He was already in the house, and now he is walking inside of it.)

2. La infano marŝas en la domon.

("The child is walking into the house." He was outside, but now he is entering the house.)

This is a second use of the -n ending.

III The -n ending used IN PLACE OF A PREPOSITION

One of the great difficulties in learning a language such as English or French is learning the correct use of the prepositions. Moving from one language to another, there often seems to be no logic to the use of prepositions.

When I was a ninth grade student I started studying French. I studied many vocabulary lists. The vocabulary items for prepositions were terribly misleading, although I did not fully recognize this for many decades. They would give the preposition à and say that it meant "to."

They would give the preposition dans and say it meant "in." According to the textbook de meant "of."

In fact this is very misleading. This is how they should have translated de: to, for, of, in, with, off of, by. They should have done something similar with most of the other prepositions.

I am not exaggerating at all. To show how arbitrary is the use of prepositions I will give a number of French translations of the English preposition to with examples and then a number of English translations of the French preposition à with examples. This will show how a single preposition from one language is translated by any number of prepositions from the other language, depending on the accompanying words. An English speaker who studies French has an enormous job of learning the many different French equivalents for the English prepositions. A French speaker who studies English has the same kind of enormous task. Most students of French and English never master the use of prepositions in their new language.

Afterwards I will show how much simpler this task can be in Esperanto.

French Translations of the English Preposition to

1. Sometimes the French do not use a preposition at all:

to be tired = être fatigué

2. Sometimes the French use the preposition "à":

to the opera = à l'opéra.

3. Sometimes the French use the preposition "en":

to France = en France

4. Sometimes the French use the preposition "pour":

to express my feelings = pour exprimer mes sentiments

5. Sometimes the French use the preposition "de":

the train to Paris = le train de Paris

6. Sometimes the French use the preposition "avec":

in time to the music = en mesure avec la musique

There are other possibilities as well.

English Translations of the French Preposition à

1. Sometimes English speakers use the preposition "about":

rêver à quelque chose = to dream about something

2. Sometimes English speakers use the preposition "to":

aller à l'école = to go to school

3. Sometimes English speakers use the preposition "at":
être à la maison = to be at home

4. Sometimes English speakers use the preposition "by":
être payé à l'heure = to be paid by the hour

5. Sometimes English speakers use the preposition "for":
ce n'est pas à moi de le dire = it's not for me to say

6. Sometimes English speakers use the preposition "in":
il l'a fait à sa manière = he did it in his own way

There are other possibilities as well.

Prepositions are little words that combine with nouns or pronouns to form a phrase. They show how one element in a sentence relates to another element in the sentences. Prepositions are used so differently in these two languages that the student must individually memorize very large numbers of individual usages. Very few students succeed in this Herculean task.

Esperanto prepositions can be somewhat complicated too. However, whereas languages like English and French require the use of prepositions, which must be learned individually, Esperanto provides ways of dispensing with the use of a particular preposition. In doubtful cases the user of Esperanto is free to utilize the all-purpose preposition "je" (pronounced like "yet" without the "t") which has no specific meaning but which may be used to show that some relationship exists. If writers or speakers do not want to use "je," they may use the accusative ending -n in place of that preposition.

In English, we can say: "We hear music." The verb "hear" requires a direct object. The same is true in Esperanto:

Ni aŭdas la muzikon.
We hear (the) music.

In English we cannot say, "We listen music." We have to say, "We listen to music." In Esperanto we can follow this form too:

Ni aŭskultas al la muziko.
We listen to (the) music.

However, let us suppose an Esperantist cannot remember which preposition is used with "listen." One way out is for him to say:

Ni aŭskultas je la muziko.
We listen to (the) music.

Another way is to use the accusative ending -n:

Ni	aŭskultas	la muzikon.
We	listen	(to) (the) music.

Here the direct object ending –n is one of the means available to solve a problem for the speaker of Esperanto, the problem of whether or not she can use a particular preposition with a verb.

The Cost-Benefit Ratio of the Ending "-n"

These then are three uses of the accusative ending –n: (1) to show the direct object clearly and unambiguously, (2) to show movement into or onto something and (3) to replace a preposition. The benefits are very great. This is why the early users of Esperanto voted down the proposal to do away with the accusative ending, –n.

However, although the benefits are very great, the cost is also great. It takes a great deal of work to acquire the habit of using the accusative ending. Practice and repeated practice is necessary. Many Esperantists who otherwise speak well forget to use this ending. Fortunately, in practice this does not often lead to misunderstanding.

The most common word order in Esperanto is subject-verb-object as in *Mi aĉetis la aŭtomobilon* (I bought the car). Although, as we have seen, Esperantists freely use other word orders for emphasis, this SVO word order has become a kind of a standard. In practice Esperantists who neglect to use the accusative ending use this word order to indicate the direct object. That is to say, they use the same method to indicate the direct object as English does.

By leaving out the direct object ending they are making a small grammatical mistake, perhaps of the significance of the common English mistake of confusing the verbs to lie and to lay. By sticking rigidly to the SVO word order they are forgoing the flexibility of word order afforded by the accusative ending. But for purposes of everyday communication in speaking and in correspondence they are clear enough.

On a level of writing or speaking where precision is important and where Esperantists wish to use the placement of words to achieve emphasis, the correct usage is available. It will always be understood.

There is no doubt that having to master the accusative ending –n places a considerable learning burden on students of Esperanto, a learning burden which students of French and English do not have. In exchange for putting in a lot of work practicing the use of this ending, students of Esperanto gain a number of benefits: (1a) great flexibility in sentence structure, (1b) the freedom to use the same sentence structure which the learners use in their native tongues, (1c) an ability to be perfectly clear always about who is performing the action and on whom the action is being performed, (2) a method of expressing direction into something or onto something, and (3) a method of avoiding errors involving prepositions. If newcomers or even fairly experienced Esperantists forget the n-ending to indicate the direct object, they can always fall back on word order, something that is not correct, but a method that will work and one which more experienced Esperantists will not make a fuss about when it is a matter of conversation or casual correspondence.

Very often, in fact, Esperantists use two methods to indicate the direct object, the accusative ending and the SVO word order. This redundancy, as Waringhien has pointed out, is very useful

when people who speak different native languages are communicating in a common third language which they use only occasionally.

In the case of the –n ending the learning burden for the student of Esperanto is certainly high. The advantages, however, are considerable. In terms of the cost-benefit ratio, as Esperantists generally see it, the costs are high but the benefits are very high.

Zamenhof believed that this trade-off was more than worthwhile. The community of users of Esperanto voted on changing the language in this regard as in other regards and that community made the decision that the advantages of the –n ending were such that it should be kept. Once the early Esperantists voted to keep –n ending, Zamenhof was adamant about keeping it. He was not going to let people continuously tinker with the basic structure of a language of a living community, a language which he hoped would eventually bring the people of the world together. He was not going to endorse continual tinkering with the language, tinkering which would discourage others from learning it because they would soon realize that anything they learned could soon be obviated by the tinkerers.

Chapter Seventeen

Two Ways to Form New Words

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This is the seventeenth chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village by Sylvan Zaft.

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As we have seen, Zamenhof originally presented a vocabulary of about 1000 words as part of his plan for the language. He derived almost all of these words from major European languages. Unlike the authors of a number of other language projects, Zamenhof did not maintain any right to keep tight control over his creation. He did not arrogate to himself the right to decide which new words might enter the language and which words should be kept out of it. His idea was that the community of users would decide which proposed new words would be adopted and which would not. Those proposed new words which speakers and writers of Esperanto introduced and kept on using would take root in the language and become part of its regular vocabulary. The proposed new words which they did not continue to use would simply fall away. This is precisely the same process which goes on in other living languages.

Esperantists, starting with their base of about 1000 morphemes, needed to create a large number of new words. Zamenhof provided two ways of doing this.

The Method of Combining Already-Existing Morphemes

One method was to combine morphemes ("little words") which already existed in the language. We have already seen some examples, but here are some more.

1. plibonigo (four morphemes)

pli	=	more
bon	=	good
ig	=	make
o	=	[noun marker]

"Plibonigo" means something that makes something else better. Change the "-ig" to "-iĝ" (becomes) and you have "pliboniĝo" which means something that has become better. English uses the word "improvement" for both of these ideas.

2. samseksamanto (five morphemes)

sam	=	same
seks	=	sex
am	=	love
ant	=	one who
o	=	[noun marker]

"Samseksamanto" means someone who loves the same sex. The English word is "homosexual." Change the "sam" to "ali" (which means "other") and you have "aliseksamanto" which means someone who loves the other sex. The English word is "heterosexual."

3. nevidebla (four morphemes)

ne	=	not
vid	=	see
ebli	=	possible
a	=	[adjective marker]

"Nevidebla" is an adjective that means "not possible to see." The English word is "invisible."

There are many Esperantists who prefer this method because they can create new words which are easy to understand even by those people who do not know any of the source languages for most Esperanto vocabulary (Latin, French, English, German etc.) Many Chinese Esperantists like this method because when they already know the components of the new word from earlier study it makes it very easy for them to learn the new word. (This is a favored way of forming new words in the Chinese language. For instance, the Chinese word for "robot" is made up out of their words for "machine" and "man.") The great advantage of this system is that newcomers to Esperanto who are not speakers or students of a European language have to learn only about 2,000 morphemes which are derived from European languages and which sound strange to them. From these basic morphemes that can be learned in a hundred hours or so they can then derive tens of thousands of highly useful words.

The Method of Importing New Roots From European Languages

The second method, which Zamenhof also used extensively, was to import whole words from European languages. One of Zamenhof's sixteen basic rules for the language provided for this. The only requirement was that the word be adapted to the system of spelling used in Esperanto. Because of this Esperanto has added to its vocabulary a large number of words that are similar to the words used in English and the Romance languages, words such as *astronaŭto*, *aŭtomobilo*, *telefono*, *spacŝipo*, *madrigalo*, *piramido* and highly technical terms that would normally be known only to experts such as *heterodino*, *dolikocefala*, *rinoskopio* and *hematologio*.

Each time an entirely new word, unrelated to the basic morphemes, is brought in, a tiny extra learning burden is imposed. Let us take as an example the English word, "hematology." Here are the current forms of this word in a few European languages and in Esperanto:

ENGLISH (American)	hematology
ENGLISH (British)	haematology
SPANISH	hematología
FRENCH	hématologie

ESPERANTO

hematologio

Here we have five forms of the same word. No doubt similar forms exist in a very large number of other European tongues. A speaker of one of these languages who has already learned this term in his own language will immediately recognize it in Esperanto. Likewise, if he first learns it in Esperanto, he will then easily recognize it in his native tongue.

The situation is quite different when it comes to someone whose native language has an entirely different indigenous word for this concept. Let us suppose that the Chinese have their own term for this concept. Then the fact that a Chinese person knows his own language's word will not help him at all with the Esperanto word. Likewise, his knowing the Esperanto word will not help him at all with the Chinese word. The Chinese person has to learn two entirely different terms for the same concept, one in Esperanto and one in his native language whereas the speaker of one of the European languages in which the term already exists, whichever language he first learns it in will easily learn the word in the second language. This adds up to a very tiny advantage for the European language speaker when it is a matter of one word. However, when the same kind of situation repeats itself hundreds or even thousands of times, it makes it significantly easier for a European or American to learn Esperanto than for a Chinese or a Korean or an Indonesian.

From the point of view of those Esperantists who prefer to form words out of already existing, commonly understood morphemes, "hematologio" was a poor choice. They would have preferred a word like:

4. sangoscienco (three morphemes)

sang	=	blood
scienc	=	science
o	=	[noun marker]

"Sangoscienco" means "the science that studies blood," which is what hematology is.

Sangoscienco would not only have been easy for, say, Chinese Esperantists to understand. It also would have been easy for those Americans and Europeans who were not already familiar with "hematology." Even a very young student of Esperanto could easily understand this word.

This brings us to one of the funny facts about language. Language exists so that people can understand each other. It exists to convey meanings from one person to another. However, people also use language to convey their meaning to certain people while hiding it from other people. This is why minority groups and young people and people in certain lines of work develop their own special vocabularies, so that they can understand each other while outsiders who happen to overhear them cannot.

Our ancestors lived in tribes. Each tribe had its own language, its own way of speaking. This made it very easy for people to identify someone either as a member of their tribe or as members of other tribes. Since there was often great loyalty in a tribe and great enmity between tribes, being a native speaker of a tribe's language, being able to speak the language naturally and correctly, provided a kind of instant identification which, in times of enmity between tribes, might be a matter of life and death.

Today this basic tribal instinct manifests itself in a variety of ways. Urban gangs have their own special colors and customs to identify members. Sometimes these gangs, like many tribes and many nations, engage in violent conflict.

In a less lethal way this tribal instinct manifests itself in the behavior of sports fans who may cheer their team and boo the other team. In extreme cases fans may become violent and riot and even kill after a contest, either after their team wins or loses.

In part Zamenhof created Esperanto in order to help people overcome this natural instinct of tribalism. However, in a very small way, tribalism manifests itself even in Esperanto in the use of technical terms like "hemetologio" which experts normally know and non-experts normally do not. It helps divide Esperantists, as it helps divide speakers of other languages, into different groupings of experts and non-experts. Experts can discuss matters using their technical vocabularies and not be easily understood by non-experts. They can use their knowledge of specialized vocabularies to intimidate non-experts.

Naturally there are some new and very subtle ideas which cannot easily be conveyed by putting together simple, commonly known roots. However there are a great many technical ideas which could very easily be expressed in this way. Here is another example:

The English word "hemicrania" and the Esperanto word "hemikranio" simply mean a headache on one side of the head. Someone who knows that "hemi" is a Greek root meaning "half" and that "cranium" or "kranio" means "skull" can figure out the meaning of the word. However, Esperanto already had a common word meaning "half": duono. Proponents of a simple (but not simplistic) vocabulary wonder why Esperanto needed a second, less common word for "half", hemi, to use in expert language?

Proponents of keeping the vocabulary of Esperanto easily understood even by new Esperantists who do not know one of the source languages would prefer a term like "unuflanka kapdoloro". "Unu" means one, "flank" means side, "kap" means head, and "doloro" means pain. This term has the advantage of being instantly understood. "Hemikranio" has the advantage of being more concise and of already being known to most experts in their native languages.

Sometimes these words which Zamenhof and others chose to adopt wholesale from ancient and modern European tongues are really puzzling to Asians. For example, the Esperanto word for "September" is septembro. This has a root "sept" which, like the Esperanto word "sep", means seven. But September is the ninth month. The reason for its name is that the ancient Roman calendar began in March and so September originally was the seventh month. (October, November and December (oktobro, novembro and decembro in Esperanto) were the eighth, ninth and tenth months, as their names indicate.

Why should a Chinese or an Indonesian or a Korean have to be puzzled about this kind of a weird terminology that only makes sense when one understands the history of the names of the months in the Latin language? One Chinese Esperantist suggested that it would be far easier to simply (and correctly) number all the months just as we number the days of the month. How much more complex it would be if, for example, each of the thirty days of April had their own individual unique names! How much simpler it would be if the months of the year and the days of the week were numbered rather than assigned discrete names which must be learned individually! How much more suitable that would be for an international language which is supposed to be very easy to learn!

Perhaps had Zamenhof thought of and introduced such a system, his language would not have been as readily accepted by Europeans and would not have taken root as the only planned international language that has become a widespread living tongue. Certainly at this late date Esperantists are not going to accept this kind of change in their language. When it comes to the days of the week and the months of the year we are stuck with these special words that provide a special little learning chore for most of the people of the world. Proponents of an

easily learned non-simplistic Esperanto vocabulary maintain that it is not necessary to keep adding that kind of learning chore when it comes to creating new words.

In the living language of Esperanto today new words are formed both by importing whole complex words from the source languages (usually English and French) and by creating new words out of common, easily understood morphemes. A great many words have taken root in the language in pretty much the same form as they existed in the source language. Other words have become common that are formed out of morphemes which every Esperanto learns early on. Sometimes these words exist side-by-side like the words for computer software, *softvaro* and *programaro*. (The ending *-ar* means "a group of.") Most Esperantists see no difficulty in this situation. They use whatever term has become most common. However, if they are stuck for a word, they can always combine commonly known morphemes to create an easily understood new coinage.

Here are a few more examples of how words are created out of commonly understood morphemes:

Here are some more Esperanto words which are formed from some of the basic little words:

5. *rajtprotektisto* ("ombudsman" in English)

<i>rajt</i>	=	right
<i>protekt</i>	=	protect
<i>ist</i>	=	a professional person
<i>o</i>	=	[noun marker]

"*Rajtprotektisto*" means a professional person who protects someone's rights, which is what an ombudsman is.

6. *ĉioscia* ("omniscient" in English)

<i>ĉio</i>	=	everything
<i>sci</i>	=	know
<i>a</i>	=	[adjective marker]

"*Ĉioscia*" means "knows-everything," which is what being omniscient is.

7. *neesprimebla* ("ineffable" in English)

<i>ne</i>	=	not
<i>esprim</i>	=	express
<i>abl</i>	=	possible
<i>a</i>	=	[adjective marker]

"*Neesprimebla*" means that which it is "not possible to express, which is what being ineffable is.

The Question of Precision

The ability to create or improvise new words when they are needed is one of the most valuable attributes of Esperanto. However, Esperantists do not go around creating complicated new words every time a new subtle idea occurs to them. Most of the time, the ordinary vocabulary of basic words is all that is needed. The point is that when the basic vocabulary does not

provide Esperantists with a way of expressing an idea, a method for creating just the right new word is readily available.

One of the interesting things about languages is that just about any one of them is likely to have more precise terms in some particular cases than another language happens to have. English is more precise when it comes to liking and loving than French is. Whereas English has the two words, "like" and "love," French makes do with one, "aimer." On the other hand, where English has the one word "love," classical Greek has three words that distinguish between different kinds of love, physical love, brotherly love, and love that is unselfish, such as a mother's love ideally is.

So sometimes one language has more precise terms and sometimes another language has more precise terms. For example, English has a more precise term in "injunction" than Esperanto does. The word "injunction" in English usually has the specific meaning of an order from a court. Esperanto uses the same word "ordono" as it uses for any other kind of command. On the other hand, Esperanto has a more precise term in "servico" which means "service" in the sense of "a silver tea service." It uses "servo" to mean a service that someone performs for someone else.

We can also note special kinds of precision which both English and Esperanto lack but which other languages have.

In the national language of Papua New Guinea, which is called either Neo-Melanesian or, none too accurately, "pidgin English," there are two words "yumi" and "mipela" which roughly mean "we." Here Neo-Melanesian is more precise than either standard English or Esperanto. "Yumi" means "I and you, the person with whom I am talking" whereas "mipela" means "I plus one or more other people, but not you." Jared Diamond has spent months in Papua New Guinea, speaking Neo-Melanesian. After he comes back to his English-speaking society and starts speaking standard English again he finds himself wondering, when his interlocutor uses "we", whether or not he is included in that "we."

(Note: Jared Diamond, *The Third Chimpanzee*, HarperPerennial, New York, 1993, p. 157.)

If you compare just about any two languages, one will be more specific when it comes to having words that denote certain concepts and the other will be more specific when it comes to having words that denote other concepts. That is just the way languages are.

Suppose we decide to create a perfect language and by "a perfect language" we mean one which has a specific individual word for each possible concept. Since the number of possible concepts is infinite, our "perfect" language will have to have an infinite number of words. Its vocabulary will be so huge that only God could learn it.

Sometimes people like to brag about a language's having an enormous vocabulary as though that were an advantage. The authors of *The Story of English* suggest that English has 1,000,000 words. Obviously no one could learn all of these words. Suppose that it takes three minutes to learn a new word and fix it firmly in your mind. Then it would take some 3,333,333 minutes to learn these words or 55,555 hours or 6,944 eight hour workdays or about 30 years worth of workdays doing nothing else besides learning these 1,000,000 words.

(Note: Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English*, Viking, New York, 1986, p. 19.)

As a national language the enormous English vocabulary is a great treasure. However, when English is asked to serve as an easy-to-learn international auxiliary language, this treasure

becomes an embarras de richesses. The trick with planning an easily learnable international language would be to enable the learner to use, say, 2000 basic morphemes to express a very wide range of concepts. Students of Esperanto do this.

The 2,000 basic morphemes can be learned in a reasonable amount of time. Taking our earlier estimate that it takes three minutes to learn a morpheme, it would take 6,000 minutes to learn these little words or 100 hours. Even if it took twice as long, these morphemes could be mastered in a school year.

A international language that can be learned in a reasonable amount of time has to have a large enough vocabulary to express all of the ideas that individuals would want to be able to express in their own language but not so enormous a vocabulary that it would take many years of diligent study for students to even begin to master it. The right balance has to be found between great precision which demands an enormous, unwieldy vocabulary, and easy learning which may limit the ability of a language to express ideas. The method of freely combining morphemes to create new, immediately understood words, which Zamenhof introduced, solves this problem. By learning a limited number of morphemes and learning how to combine them to create new, easily-understood words, students of Esperanto can both have their cake and eat it too.

Side by Side

To establish his new language Zamenhof made many translations including The Jewish Bible, Hamlet and fairy tales by Hans Christian Andersen. In these and other writings he constantly created new words using both of the methods which he had introduced: (a) combining morphemes that would easily be understood by those Europeans or Americans or Asians or Africans who have learned a few thousand basic morphemes or "little words" in the language and (b) taking in words from major European languages, such as English or French or Greek or Latin. Zamenhof provided for this second method by means of his fifteenth fundamental grammatical rule. This rule stated that international words could come into Esperanto. They would be changed only enough to fit the spelling system of the language.

As we have seen, this way of forming new words by taking them in whole from European tongues is obviously very advantageous for those Esperantists who already know a language that contains them. Such individuals instantly recognize the Esperanto form. However, this method creates a problem for people whose language does not contain the word.

Here are a few common Esperanto words which have come into the language in this way. Next to each of these words is another, perfectly normal way of expressing the idea using "little words." The English counterparts of these words are: 1. soldier, 2. adult, 3. alphabet, 4. diverge, 5. languor and 6. pseudonym.

	New root	Combining root	Meaning of the combined form
1.	soldat-o	ter-milit-ist-o	land-war-professional
2.	adolt-o	plen-kresk-ul-o	full-grown-one
3.	alfabet-o	a-bo-co	ABC
4.	diverĝ-i	dis-iĝ-i	apart-become
5.	langvor-o	mal-vigl-ec-o	opposite of-lively-quality
6.	pseŭdonim-o	kaŝ-nom-o	hidden-name

In practice very large numbers of Esperanto words are formed by each of these two methods, one of which favors those who know a Romance or Germanic tongue, and one of which

provides an easier way of learning words to those people who do not know a European tongue. Sometimes the ordinary Esperanto word is one that has been introduced from another language. Sometimes it is one that is composed of already commonly used morphemes. Sometimes two, one from each group, exist side-by-side.

Practically everyone agrees that the basic vocabulary of Esperanto should be European. 75% of the morphemes are derived from Romance languages, such as Latin, French or Spanish, 20% come from Germanic languages, such as German and English, and 5% come from other languages such as the Slavic languages and Greek.

(Note: Pierre Janton, *Esperanto: Language, Literature, and Community*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993, p. 51.)

The question that has aroused considerable debate among Esperantists involves the number of additional basic words which should be introduced from European languages, creating additional learning burdens for those who do not already know one of the source languages. When a new word is needed, should an altogether new term be brought into Esperanto from outside the language, from European languages, or should a term be created from elements that already exist inside of the language, elements which are already well understood by competent Chinese, Korean and African Esperantists?

Sometimes existing elements cannot be made to do the trick. However, often they can, but Esperantists who are native speakers of a Romance language or a Germanic language, pull in one of their words anyway. They already know the word very well in their own language. They are already comfortable with it. Since most Esperantists are Europeans or Americans, this happens frequently. Each time a new term is brought in from the outside, it lightens the learning load for the American or European but adds to the learning load for many other Esperantists.

In spite of the great influx of new basic words from European languages, Esperanto remains far more accessible for Asians and Africans and speakers of Arabic than European languages such as English or French. If the vocabulary is getting more challenging all the time, the ability to create perfectly acceptable words out of existing elements, making up words "on the fly," as one Esperantist put it, freedom from idioms that must be learned individually, and freedom from the multitudes of exceptions to rules that plague so many national languages, all combine to make Esperanto a much more learnable language than those better-known tongues which are normally taught in schools and universities.

Chapter Eighteen

Two More Difficulties of Esperanto

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This is the Eighteenth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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Esperanto is not without problems for the student. Because an enormous number of Esperanto words are created by combining morphemes, one of the learning burdens which the student of Esperanto has is to figure out where one morpheme ends and another begins. This can occasionally be tricky. Even after spending thousands of hours with the language once in a while I am still tripped up by this feature.

Reading Compound Words

Suppose that a student comes across the word *perfido* and that the student knows that *per* means "by means of" and that *fido* means "faith." Following the rules of Esperanto the student could figure out that *perfido* means "by means of faith." If he saw a sentence *Li trovis ĝin perfide*, he could suppose it meant something like "He found it by means of faith." In fact, *perfido*, a word which Zamenhof introduced into the language, means "treachery." It is the same as the English word "perfidy." (The English word *perfidy* comes from the Latin *per* which means "by means of" and the Latin *fides*, which means "faith." That a word that means "treachery" comes from words that mean "by means of faith" is not at all unique to Esperanto. Perhaps these words originated in a shorthand way of saying that something was attained by means of counterfeit or feigned faith.)

A common Esperanto word is *eraro*. It means, as you might guess, "an error." However, this little word could be read as being composed of the morphemes *er* and *ar*, in which case *eraro* would be a perfectly good word meaning "a collection of elements."

These two examples are somewhat artificial. I am not aware of anyone having been tripped up by them. However, the following examples show what does actually happen:

I am reading an article about how minority languages are dying off. I come across the word *formantaj*. My first inclination is to read it as beginning with the morpheme *for*, which means "away." But that makes no sense, and immediately I see that the word begins with the morpheme *form* which has the same meaning as it does in English and that the word means "forming." In this case my reading was only held up for the barest split second.

A friend sends me an e-mail letter containing the word *pos'tetikedoj*. He uses the apostrophe to indicate that there is a circumflex accent over the *s*. (You cannot write accented letters in e-

mail.) I read the first three letters, pos', as the Esperanto word for "pocket" and I wonder what tetikedoj are. After a moment I realize that there is no such word and that the word means something like labels for envelopes. Pos't (poŝt) means "mail" and etikedo means "label."

Here are two examples from the experience of a new Esperantist who has progressed to the point where she is reading a book in fairly easy Esperanto. She came across the word bluokulaj. She immediately recognized that it was a compound word, and she took the first component word to be bluo. Bluo is a noun which, as you might guess, means "blue" (the color). She could not figure out what kulaj means. Her dictionary told her that kulo means "gnat." However, that made no sense for bluokulaj was an adjective that modified the Esperanto for "baby girl."

She brought her problem to me. As an experienced Esperantist I saw at once that the second component of this compound word was not "kulaj" which would mean "like a gnat" but "okulaj" which comes from the noun okulo, meaning "eye" (as in the English word "oculist"). In other words the author assumed that anyone would read the word as blu-okulaj and not as bluo-kulaj. (In combining words in Esperanto you can either include or omit the noun or adjective ending of the first component, whichever sounds better.) The author assumed that any reader would break the word after blu and not after bluo.

The author could have ensured that new Esperantists would read the word correctly by simply using a hyphen to write "blu-okulaj." For some reason Esperantists are stingy with their hyphens in such cases. This causes a lot of trouble for readers of Esperanto, certainly for new readers, sometimes for experienced readers. In this regard Esperanto is not the extremely easy language which many of its proponents suppose it to be.

Here is another example from the same student: She came across the word ĉiamulo. Without any hyphen to guide her, she quite reasonably read the word as ĉia-mulo which would mean "each kind of mule." However, this made no sense in the given context. It turns out that the word should have been read as ĉiam-ulo which would mean "always-person" or "someone who is always there" (like a regular patron of a restaurant).

One way of avoiding this problem is for Esperantists to be a little more generous with their hyphens. However, even if they make a reasonable effort to do so, there will still be this kind of impediment where an Esperantist reader will divide a word wrongly in her imagination and at first come up with a wrong meaning and then will have to go back and make a correction. Perhaps all of this will just take a second but it will happen a number of times and slightly slow down the comprehension even of a quite competent Esperantist.

This is a trade-off. It goes along with the nature of the language in which the student does not have to learn an enormous number of words to be able to communicate effectively but instead can put together little words, morphemes, to create new words. The advantage of the system of creating longer words out of well-known components is that a student does not have to master more than about 1000 or 1200 words and parts of words to gain a decent working knowledge of the language.

In my opinion the gain is worth the cost. Because of the logical construction of the language I was able to gain a fine working knowledge of the language after a few months of hard work. In reading correspondence in ordinary, everyday Esperanto, I rarely have the kind of problem just described. In my experience it comes up mainly in literary Esperanto.

This feature of the language, freely making words out of components, makes for some pleasant literary effects. I have made use of it myself. It is fun to play with the language this way and to use it to get ideas across. More than that, it makes it easy to create words as needed "on the

fly", as one Esperantist put it. For example, if I do not know the Esperanto word for "shed" I can say "ilejo" or "ileja konstruaĵeto" which mean "a place for tools" or "a tool-place little-building." I can communicate effectively by putting together components of words to create the words I need and I will be understood. There is a cost to this as I have shown but to my mind the benefit is enormous. The cost-benefit ratio is favorable.

The Problem of Transitivity

In English some verbs are intransitive while others are transitive. The verb to limp, for instance, is intransitive. That means that limp cannot take a direct object. You cannot limp someone or something. You just limp.

To expect, on the other hand, is a transitive verb. It requires a direct object. You cannot simply expect. You have to expect something and that something, whatever it may be, is the direct object of the verb. In the sentence "I expect rain", rain is the direct object.

Most English verbs are used both as transitive verbs and as intransitive verbs. For instance, the verb to run may be used either way. Run is used as an intransitive verb in the sentence "He runs fast" and as a transitive verb in the sentence "He runs the whole show." The same is true about the verb to boil. Boil is used as an intransitive verb in the sentence "The water is boiling now" and as a transitive verb in the sentence, "I'll boil some water for tea."

Esperanto authorities discuss the matter of transitivity. Some, such as Grosjean-Maupin, claim that there are the same three kinds of verbs in Esperanto as there are in English (transitive verbs, intransitive verbs and those verbs that are both transitive and intransitive). Others, such as Waringhien, claim that each verb in its basic form is either transitive or intransitive but not both. Where a verb appears to be both, Waringhien holds, there are different meanings involved. When the verb is intransitive it has one meaning and when it is transitive it has another meaning.

An Extra Learning Load

Now all of this might appear to be just grammarians' quibbles. However, students of Esperanto have a real problem when it comes to learning verbs. This problem, of course, does not involve complex patterns of conjugation because all Esperanto verbs are conjugated in the same simple way. The problem involves having to learn the specific transitivity of each verb.

For example, the verb *boli* is intransitive and only intransitive. You can say "*La akvo bolas*" (The water is boiling) but you cannot say "*Mi bolas la akvon*." To turn a verb that is intransitive into a transitive verb you have to use the little suffix *-ig* which means "to make" or "to create." You say, "*Mi boligas la akvon*" which means something like "I make boil the water" or, in better English, "I cause the water to boil." In English there is no problem. You use boil both as a transitive verb (I am boiling the water) and as an intransitive verb (The water is boiling).

On the other hand the verb *estingi* (to extinguish, to put out) is a transitive verb. You can say "*Mi estingis la kandelon*" (I put out the candle) but you cannot say "*La kandelo estingis*." That would mean that the candle was extinguishing something else. To turn a verb that is transitive into an intransitive verb you have to add the little ending *-iĝ* which means "to become." You say, "*La kandelo estingiĝis*" which means "The candle became extinguished."

For each verb students of Esperanto have to learn an additional fact besides the meaning of the verb. That additional fact is the specific transitivity of the verb (whether it is transitive or

intransitive). This provides a certain learning load. Once students know the transitivity of a particular verb, they can easily convert the verb to the other state of transitivity by adding the appropriate ending, -ig or -iĝ.

The Uses of -ig and -iĝ

Students of Esperanto is saved the necessity of learning many separate verbal roots because they has available -ig and -iĝ. These suffixes can be used not only to change the transitivity of verbs but also to turn adjectives, nouns, adverbs and prepositions into verbs. Here are some examples:

morti	to die	mortigi	to kill
ami	to love	amigi	to endear
stari	to be standing	stariĝi	to stand up
fali	to fall	faligi	to knock down
levi	to lift	leviĝi	to rise
bona	good	bonigi	to repair, restore
feliĉa	happy	feliĉigi	to delight
freneza	crazy	frenezigi	to drive s.o. mad
klara	clear	klarigi	to explain
lerta	clever, able	lertigi	to train
frua	early	malfruigi	to delay
peco	piece	pecigi	to dismember
gusto	taste	gustigi	to season
silueto	silhouette	siluetiĝi	to stand out
post	after (in time)	postiĝi	to lag
sub	below	subigi	to overcome
anstataŭ	instead of	anstataŭiĝi	to be replaced

The logic is clear. If ami means "to love" then amigi means "to cause to love" or "to endear." If klara means "clear" then klarigi means "to make clear" or "to explain." If stari means "to be standing", then stariĝi means "to become standing" or, in better English, "to stand up."

Common Errors

The most common errors which Esperantists make, even Esperantists who have thousands of hours of experience with the language, are errors involving the accusative ending and errors involving the transitivity of verbs. Bernard Golden has pointed out that this latter kind of error is committed not only by ordinary Esperantists but also by experts, by authors of books on teaching the language and by members of the Academy of Esperanto. There are at least many hundreds of verbs in the language. Because of this, it is no wonder that Esperantists have trouble keeping the transitivity of each individual verb in mind.

For most Esperantists there is not much of a problem. If they make this kind of a mistake they are almost always understood anyway. If an Esperantist were to say "Mi bolos la akvon" everyone present would understand that he is using bolos as a transitive verb. Some who are more expert in the language would realize that he is not speaking quite correctly but of course they would understand what he was saying perfectly well. In English the same verb is often used both in a transitive sense and in an intransitive sense. The context makes clear which use is involved. The same, in practice, is true in much, slightly incorrect, everyday Esperanto.

Esperantists have been making errors involving transitivity for a hundred years and they have understood each other in spite of this.

Nevertheless, when an Esperantist wants to write for publication in something more than the newsletter of his local club he runs into a problem. He has to keep his dictionary handy to make certain that he is getting the transitivity of verbs right. Golden says that although Esperanto is an easy language to learn, this feature of the language is not easy at all.

He suggests a solution, that the common usage of ordinary Esperantists be at first tolerated and then gradually accepted as correct usage. This would get rid of a big learning load, eliminate a lot of errors which do not get in the way of understanding and make Esperanto an easy language to learn correctly.

(Note: Bernard Golden, *Komplika Transitiveco en Esperanto*, *Internacia Pedagogia Revuo*, 1/95 (pp. 1-11) and 2/95 (pp. 16-21)

Other Esperantists disagree with Golden. They claim that there is a degree of precision provided by verbs being basically either transitive or intransitive but not both. Jouko Lindstedt (in a discussion in soc.culture.esperanto) points out that Esperantists often add superfluous -ig or -iĝ endings to verbs. He does not consider such errors very serious but he points out that such usage is not altogether correct either. He gives as an example the verb *movi* which means "to move" and is transitive. An Esperantist not being certain that *movi* is transitive says "*Mi movigis la tablon*" intending to express the idea "I moved the table." In fact what this person is saying is "I caused to move the table" or, in good English, "I caused the table to be moved." In other words this sentence does not mean "I moved the table myself" but "I had someone else move the table." There is a difference.

Lindstedt holds that this system of transitivity is a basic part of the grammar of the language. He admits that this feature of the language is not easy to master but he claims that the value of the additional precision that it brings is well worth the added effort to learn the specific transitivity of each verb. In other words he is satisfied with the cost-benefit ratio.

It will be interesting to see how Esperanto develops. If a good number of highly respected Esperantists were to start following common usage in this matter, then common usage would gradually come to be regarded as correct. This is what happens in all languages. French developed from Latin. As Marcel Proust points out somewhere in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, all that French is is a collection of boners in speaking Latin. In all languages, including English, of course, when a mistake is made all the time by practically everyone it becomes correct usage.

I do not think that this kind of change will take place with the feature of specific transitivity. I think that most Esperantists will continue to make these tiny errors regarding transitivity (as well as often omitting the accusative ending) and that they will be understood anyway. On the other hand expert Esperantists will strive to get the transitivity of each verb right to maintain the precision of the language.

Esperanto, like other languages, will continue to be spoken and written on different levels. Some will use the language on an ordinary level and they will be understood by everybody. Golden calls this species of the language "the demotic language." On the other hand a minority of Esperantists will speak a more elegant, a more perfect Esperanto, what Golden refers to as "the elite version of the language."

This "demotic Esperanto" can be learned very rapidly. It is a highly effective means of communication. The "elite version" of the language takes more effort to master. This latter version of the language is suitable for literary works of the highest quality.

Chapter Nineteen

A Fine Literary Language

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This is the nineteenth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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Many Esperantists have devoted themselves to the creation of a considerable body of literature in the last hundred years. Much of this literature consists of translations from a large number of languages. Much of it consists of original work. Let us first take a look at the works in translation and then at the original works.

From Literatures Large and Small

Zamenhof understood that there was a big difference between a plan for a language and a living language. In order to show that the new language could do what any other language could do, he translated a large number of works of world literature into Esperanto. Up until a very short time before his death during the first World War he was working on his translation of the Jewish Bible from the original Hebrew.

A great many Esperantists have followed in his footsteps. Among the works that have been translated into Esperanto are the Finnish epic, *The Kalevala*, the English children's book, *Winnie the Pooh* by Milne, the great work of Spanish literature, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes, the masterpiece of Italian literature, *The Divine Comedy* by Dante, plays of Shakespeare including *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, and many masterpieces of French Literature including Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. In addition to these we have the *Bhagavad Gita* from Sanskrit, *The Koran* from Arabic, the Bible from Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, Plato's *Republic* from Greek, Goethe's *The Sorrows of the Young Werther* from German, and works translated from Chinese, Japanese, Hungarian, Macedonian, ancient Icelandic, Estonian, Korean, Dutch, Latin, Serbo-Croatian, Bulgarian, Swedish, Norwegian and so on.

In one way there is nothing remarkable about this. There are many more works translated from a variety of languages into English or French or German than there are works translated into Esperanto. You might admit that it is a curious and interesting fact that a great many works have been translated into Esperanto but chances are you would prefer to read them as translated into your native language.

This works very well for those who speak one of the world's great languages, a language which has translations from a great panoply of world literature. For those who speak one of the so-

called minor languages which may not have a large number of translations of world literary masterpieces, the availability of Esperanto translations could prove very helpful.

There is, however, something special about a number of these translations. When a work is translated from a foreign language into English, say, the translator is often a native speaker of English who has learned the foreign language as a second language. However, when a work is translated into Esperanto, the translator is usually a native speaker of the language in which the work was originally written.

At the United Nations when a document is translated from English into Chinese, the translator is normally a native speaker of the Chinese language who has studied English extensively. On the other hand when a document is translated from Chinese into English the translator is normally a native speaker of the English language who has studied Chinese extensively. This is because it is very hard to find someone, even on the level of the best professional translators, who can write as well in a foreign language as they can in their own language. Even though a professional translator has spent tens of thousands of hours with a foreign language he will not know that language on the same level that he knows his native tongue.

Esperanto, however, is so much easier than national languages that it can be thoroughly mastered after a great deal of hard work. Thus translators can learn how to write Esperanto as well as they can write their native tongue. Knowing both their native language and Esperanto thoroughly, they are in an excellent position to do a particularly fine job of translating into Esperanto.

Sometimes these translations are wonderfully done. Sometimes they are less wonderfully done. However, when translations into Esperanto are well done, the translator has had a little edge because he or she, being a native speaker of the source language, is in a special position to catch the nuances of the original, nuances which are sometimes missed by translators who are translating from a language that is not their own.

I had an interesting experience in this regard. I translated one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, "The Man With the Twisted Lip", into Esperanto. I sent it to Claude Piron who very kindly corrected it. In some cases he corrected grammatical errors. In a great many places he showed me a number of ways in which the translation could be stylistically improved. However, he found that my translation was very accurate.

He went to a library and got a French translation of the same story and then compared it with my Esperanto translation. Where Mrs. Watson was doing needlework in the original English, in the French version Mrs. Watson was knitting. Where Watson straightened up in his chair in the original English, in the French version he stood up. There were a good number of little inaccuracies of this nature. In my Esperanto translation, as stylistically imperfect as it might be, there were no such little inaccuracies.

Because English is my native language I understood what Doyle wrote much more accurately than that particular French translator. Because Esperanto is a language that can be learned to a very high level in a relatively short time, I was able to accurately translate Doyle's words.

Many of the people who translate works into Esperanto speak languages which are generally classified as minor languages. Writers in these so-called minor languages are rarely considered for the Nobel Prize for literature because their languages have not been studied by the judges and because works from their languages are rarely translated into what might be called the major world languages. Esperanto gives writers from these "minor" languages a chance to find an audience which, although very small, is distributed over the entire world.

Original Literature in Esperanto

Over the century or so of its existence Esperanto has accumulated a considerable body of original works. Major novels have been published in the language. A great deal of original poetry has been written. Short stories have come out. Essays have appeared.

Some of this work has been of poor quality, some of good quality, some of outstanding quality. Here are three examples of very fine original writing in Esperanto:

A Long Poem

In 1992 a little volume, *Lasta Ĉevalo* by Josef Rumler, appeared. It consisted of one long poem of about 450 lines. Rumler had previously published three collections of his poetry in his native Czech language. In 1978 the poet, who was then in his mid-fifties, learned Esperanto. When Rumler was seventy, the full version of *Lasta Ĉevalo* came out. Here is the opening strophe of the poem, the title of which means "Last Horse" or "A Last Horse":

Pasas ĉevalo en mi tra la valo
en mia animo de limo al limo
ĝis ties senlimo pasas ĉevalo
ĉevalo la mimo de mia animo
pasas ĉevalo de valo al valo
en mia animo tra mia animo
moviĝas troas ĉevalo galopas ĉevalo saltas ĉevalo danceskas ĉevalo
flugnaĝas ĉevalo en la aero freŝa aero tuj ĉe la tero
laŭ ritmo de nia komuna afero
afero mistero
herbricha afero ŝaŭmsanga afero
de l'senta sfero

The accent in Esperanto always falls on the next-to-the-last syllable. Rumler takes advantage of that fact in this poem to give it a galloping rhythm. Here is a translation of these lines:

In me through the valley a horse passes
in my soul from border to border
up to its limitlessness a horse passes
a horse my soul's mime

a horse passes from valley to valley
in my soul through my soul
a horse moves trots gallops a horse leaps a horse dances a horse
flyswims a horse in the fresh air air right at the earth
follows the rhythm of our shared affair
an affair a mystery
an affair rich in grass a blood-foam affair
of the sphere of feeling

Needless to say my translation does not do justice to the original, but even through the dim window of this translation something of the magic of the original can be sensed. Some of the nuances would require a masterful translator to render.

It says a great deal for Esperanto that a poet can learn the language in his fifties and then produce a masterpiece like *Lasta Ĉevalo*.

(Note: Josef Rumler, *Lasta ĉevalo*, Chapecó: Fonto, 1992.)

A Novel

Trevor Steele, a young Australian author, brought out a novel, *Sed Nur Fragmento* (Only a Fragment) in 1987. This work of nearly 450 pages tells the story of Nikolaj Ivanoviĉ Maklin, a Russian scientist in the 19th century who goes to live among the natives on an enormous island in the southern hemisphere, an island which is referred to only as "la Verda Insulo" (the Green Island). On this island, a fictional counterpart to New Guinea, Maklin studies not only the people and their customs but the flora and fauna and geography as well. When he arrives Maklin is a strict rationalist in the mold of his mentor, a German professor. However, on the island, and later in "civilized society" in Queensland, in Australia, this Russian rationalist undergoes experiences which transform his world-view. Nikolaj Ivanoviĉ Maklin comes to realize that the life which we see, which we experience here is only a fragment of an enormously greater whole that is beyond our comprehension.

(Note: Trevor Steele, *Sed nur fragmento*, Chapecó: Fonto, 1987.)

Whereas Rumler stretches the bounds of the language, Trevor Steele employs a classically clear prose to guide his readers into the mystery.

A Book About a War

One of the most moving books ever written in Esperanto is Spomenka Štimec's *Kroata Milita Noktlibro* (Nightbook of the Croatian War). In this short book, barely a hundred pages long, the author describes the experiences of Esperantists and other ordinary citizens in the disastrous war which broke out when Yugoslavia fell apart. Although both she and those whom she loves suffered terribly on account of what Serbs did, Štimec writes a book which calls for peace, a book which presents all of the pain of war while renouncing vengeance.

Ŝtimec's style is at the same time very simple, clear and poetic. One short paragraph demonstrates the efficacy of this pure style:

Tio kio aŭdeblis de la fenestro estis paserĉirpo. La paseroj konversaciis sur la pirarbo. Kia privilegia afero: esti vekita de la paseroj kaj ne de la sireno.

The chirping of sparrows could be heard from the window. The sparrows were speaking to each other in the pear tree. What a privilege it was to be woken by the sparrows and not by the siren.

This simple, deeply moving book has appeared in Japanese and German translations.

(Note: Spomenka Ŝtimec. Vienna: Pro Esperanto, 1993.)

The Need for Esperanto Literature

Instead of providing a long list of some of the thousands of works by Esperanto poets and prose writers, I have written about three individual works which moved me deeply. In doing so I have tried to give a sense that Esperanto has successfully served as a vehicle for outstanding literature.

It may be asked what Esperanto's use as a literary language has to do with the Esperanto dream presented at the beginning of this book. Surely a language does not have to have a great literary potential to serve as an easy-to-learn communications tool.

It would, in fact, be easy to plan a language that could be learned in even less time than Esperanto. That would not be a difficult challenge at all. Up until now thousands of plans for international languages have been devised. However, of all of those plans only one has led to a language which is used by at least hundreds of thousands of speakers all over the world. Most of the others never got out of the planning stage. Esperanto has persisted for more than a century. Although interest in Esperanto has died out in some places, at the same time interest has developed in other places. If there are very few Esperantists in India where there once was a budding movement, there is a growing number in Korea which hosted the Universala Kongreso de Esperanto in 1994, the largest international meeting in that country in that year.

Why has Esperanto become more than simply a plan for a language? Why has it become a living tongue used by at least hundreds of thousands of people today? Why does it persist long after it became apparent that the world was not ready to adopt it as the global interlanguage?

One of the reasons may be because of its literature. Authors who create poems and novels, readers who enjoy poems and novels in a language which they have worked to make their own, acquire a special feeling for that language. Just as an American wandering through some Central or Eastern European city is delighted to hear another person speaking American English, so Esperantists are delighted when they get a chance to share their language with the members of their small international community who live in some far-off part of the world. They touch each other, either directly, through face-to-face contact when they visit each other's lands, or through correspondence, or by means of the Esperanto discussion group on the Internet, or by writing or reading poems, novels, stories, essays or biographical accounts.

It is this kind of feeling that has made Esperanto a living language and has kept it a living language. This special feeling is due in no small part to the common, shared literature that has

been created in this unique tongue , a language which does not belong to just one nation or a group of nations but which belongs equally to whomever makes the effort and learns it.

Chapter Twenty

A Still Easier Language?

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This is the twentieth chapter of a work-in-progress, Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village by Sylvan Zaft.

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Some have suggested that we could devise a plan for a language which would be easier to learn than Esperanto. Here is a list of some of the changes that have been suggested.

Get rid of the plural ending -j. Chinese gets along nicely without a plural ending.

Replace the three third person singular pronouns, the words for he, she and it, with a single pronoun that is not gender-specific. Hungarian has this feature.

Get rid of the Esperanto word for the (la). Russian has no word for the.

Get rid of the r-sound. This is an exceedingly difficult sound for the Chinese and Japanese to pronounce, and the Chinese and Japanese make up a good part of the human race. Many Americans find that they cannot pronounce the trilled r-sound which, according to some authorities, is the only correct r-sound in Esperanto.

Get rid of the accusative ending -n. Instead make all verbs neither transitive nor intransitive in their bare form. Create a special particle to indicate that a direct object, stated or implied, follows. Verbs will be transitive whenever they are used with that particle. Hebrew has such a particle in the word which is pronounced as es or et or eth, depending on the dialect. Create a second particle which indicates that the verb is being used as an intransitive verb. This method would save all the work of learning the transitivity status of each verb.

Establish a rule making it wrong to use a new root when a reasonable combination of existing roots could do the job. Instead of saying something like "telephone", for instance, say something like "farspeaktool." The Germans do this with one of their words for "telephone", Fernsprecher (far-speaker).

No doubt there are many other possible proposals for a language that might be even easier to learn. By introducing simplifications like these, someone could create a plan for a language that could be learned in, say, fifty fewer hours.

It might be asked, why has this not been done?

In fact it probably has been done. Thousands of plans for new languages have been developed and proposed. Some of these plans are for languages that would be more difficult to learn than Esperanto but others, certainly, are for languages which would be easier to learn. However, of all of the thousands of plans for new international languages only Esperanto has come fully alive with an international community, its own extensive literature, a good number of periodicals, and regular gatherings numbering up to thousands of individuals.

Long ago the English philologist J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, pointed out that it was possible to devise a simpler language than Esperanto but not without giving up a great deal of "the individuality, coherence and beauty, which appear in the great natural idioms, and which do appear to a considerable degree (probably as high a degree as is possible in an artificial idiom) in Esperanto...." Although Tolkien had not learned how to speak or write in the language, he had studied its structure and grammar as a professional linguist and had "read a fair amount written in it." Therefore his judgment was based on a personal acquaintance with the language. Tolkien endorsed Esperanto.

(Tolkien's comment was reprinted in *Esperanto USA* 1993, Issue no. 4)

Whether a person finds something beautiful or not is a matter of taste. I have listened while two Spanish teachers made fun of the way French sounds. They spoke some French sentences with excellent pronunciation and obvious disdain and then spoke some Spanish with excellent pronunciation and obvious affection. Other individuals believe that French is a very beautiful language.

The same difference of opinion would no doubt apply to other features of a language besides the way in which it is pronounced. Tolkien, speaking of Esperanto as a whole, gave a high rating to its aesthetic qualities. He said that Esperanto was easy to learn and had fine aesthetic qualities. He admitted that plans for a simpler language had been devised but that that language was "hideous."

In Esperanto we have a trade-off. It takes a little longer to gain a good working knowledge of Esperanto than it would a hypothetical simpler language but a good deal of aesthetic value is gained thereby. In my opinion the cost-benefit ratio is favorable.

Aesthetics is not just trimming when it comes to human affairs. It is central to the quality of human life. Whether we speak of music, painting, literature, sports, chess, movies, photography, clothing, science, mathematics, architecture, automobile design and so on, the aesthetic side of our common concerns is of great importance.

Sports reports in the paper talk about "a beautiful play", "a beautiful catch", "a beautiful run." They talk about "winning ugly", when a team wins a game but has not played beautifully. Brilliancy prizes are given for aesthetically valuable chess games. Mathematicians value elegant solutions to problems. Scientists like Einstein were led to their theories partly because they were beautiful.

Aesthetic value is one of the considerations we take into account in selecting cars, houses, boats, lovers, spouses, solutions to mathematical problems, scientific theories, music, movies and so on. It may very well be one of the considerations we take into account in selecting a language. For at least a considerable number of people the aesthetic value of Esperanto is one of its features which has attracted people to it.

This aesthetic value does not only lie in literary works but also in the ordinary use of the language. The way Esperanto has been constructed permits ordinary users to be creative in making up new words. We saw how this is done in Chapter Ten. Claude Piron has collected a

large number of spontaneous words created in ordinary conversations by Esperantists. These coinings took place when people who had different native languages were speaking with one another in international get-togethers. Piron gives a number of examples in his little book in Esperanto, *La Bona Lingvo*.

Here are a few of them.

A number of Esperantists were in Vienna and had been following some directional signs with arrows on them. They decided to go back. A German among them said, "Ni malsekvu la sagojn." (p. 42) The closest I can come in English would be, "Let's unfollow the arrows." In English this would be unnaturally cute. In Esperanto it is concise, natural and original.

Also in Vienna a Slovene, describing someone, said, "Li similas Orson Welles—Jes, eĉ voĉe." In English this would be, "He's like Orson Welles—Yes, even voicely." Try to put this "voicely" into good English.

A Dutchman remarked in Zagreb "Vortelekti vere estas vortkompari." These four words mean "To select words is truly to compare words." As far as syllables go the two sentences are almost equally long. However, the key element vort (word) comes in a place of emphasis at the beginning of the compound words which are infinitives, vortelekti (to wordchoose) and vortkompari (to wordcompare): "Wordchoose truly is wordcompare."

In Poitiers, France, a Frenchman remarked about a man who was acting in an avuncular manner to a child, "Ĉu li oĉjas?" We could translate this as "Is he uncle-ing?" However oĉjo is not the word for uncle. Onklo is. Oĉjo is a diminutive form of onklo just as "mommy" is a diminutive form for "mom." What this three-word question is really getting across is this: "Is this man behaving like a really affectionate, beloved uncle to the child?"

Of course languages like English and French and the other great national languages are wonderful for getting across nuances of meaning, but they do this in different ways than Esperanto does. English does this by making available an enormous number of synonyms, each of which carries a slightly different nuance. English also does this by making available an enormous number of idiomatic expressions. Esperanto achieves this end by permitting its users to combine any of its word elements to create new words. In English, French and Esperanto those who have mastery over the language can express themselves with great creativity. This, of course, is true for the other languages as well.

And this creativity necessarily involves aesthetic values.

The aesthetic qualities of the language may be what has kept Esperanto alive.

It would be easy to devise a plan for a yet simpler language. However, there is no guarantee that such a language would work in real-life situations. Esperanto has been used by large numbers of people for a century now. It has been proven to attract people and to work for them, in marriages, in travel, in correspondence, in translating works of literature and in creating new works of literature. Just as a vast number of people are said to love their native language, so a great many Esperantists love their common language. Some of them love it so much that for them Esperanto's value does not lie in the future when they envision it as being adopted for general international use. It lies in the present moment as the language of a small but flourishing, unique international community.

Chapter Twenty-One

The Propagandists and the Raumists

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This is the twenty-first chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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Over the course of a century and more, Esperantists have dreamed of the time when all mankind would share one common language, the language which they have learned and the language which they have attempted to spread throughout the world. Many Esperantists have been tireless in their use of propaganda to promote their language. The word propaganda arose in the Catholic Church where it was a short way of referring to the Sacred Congregation for Propagating the Faith. The Nazis gave propaganda a bad name by their use of vicious lies and distortions against those whom they strove to eliminate. In English propaganda is now often used in a pejorative sense. This is not the case with the Esperanto word *propagando* which simply means working hard to propagate an idea.

In their propaganda, as with any propaganda, Esperantists are one-sided, and sometimes they even stretch the truth. They paint a picture of a language which can be learned very, very easily. Zamenhof himself, in his first little brochure about Esperanto, spoke of the language as being so extraordinarily easy that it was child's play to learn it.

Although Esperanto is much, much easier to learn than unplanned languages, it still requires a certain amount of attentive study. Most students need to invest dozens of hours of hard study before they are ready to begin to correspond. Being able to read literature and being able to converse fluently requires additional time, perhaps a hundred to two hundred hours of study and practice.

Individual talents vary. There are those rare individuals who have learned the language in a few weeks and there are others who have dabbled in it for years without getting very far. Many have made the effort to learn how to read and write and have exchanged quite a few letters in the language but have not spent much time speaking. Such Esperantists may write perfectly well without being able to converse fluently.

Some are intrigued by the idea of Esperanto but never manage to devote diligent and regular study time to learning the language. Perhaps they have been misled by exaggerated claims about the fantastic, incredible ease with which people supposedly learn Esperanto. Some of these insist on speaking English all the time at meetings of their Esperanto club. Although their fervent support of the language is welcome, they often seriously interfere with those who come to club meetings to speak and hear the language. Sometimes they are referred to as "bonan matenon" Esperantists because they know how to say "good morning" in Esperanto but very little else.

Just as a lawyer who is defending a client or a candidate who is running for office is not interested in presenting both sides fairly, so propagandists for Esperanto are not interested in seriously dealing with critiques of the language. They do not discuss suggestions like the one made by the Chinese Esperantist who said that it would be easier to learn the months if they were numbered rather than having individual names. Another example of a topic that propagandists do not discuss is the problem of naming nations and of nationalities.

The Naming of Nations and Nationalities

Umberto Eco, who endorses Esperanto, has pointed out that Esperanto is not a perfect language. One way, according to many students of the language, in which it is not perfect is in the way it names nations and members of those nations.

In English there is no regular relationship between the names of countries and the words that signify people of that nationality. The following examples make this clear.

NAME OF THE COUNTRY	A PERSON OF THAT NATIONALITY
The United States	American
Germany	German
China	Chinese
England	Englishman
Spain	Spaniard
Israel	Israeli
Peru	Peruvian
Denmark	Dane
Sweden	Swede
Poland	Pole
Greece	Greek
Switzerland	Swiss
Philippines	Filipino

There is no way the foreign student of English can figure out from the name of a nation the term for the nationality or vice-versa. Each term must be learned individually.

The situation is nowhere near this chaotic in Esperanto. However, there are two separate patterns and the user of the language must remember which nations go with one pattern and which go with the other. If there were just one pattern this would get rid of this problem and a whole class of possible. However, unfortunately, from my point of view, the language did not develop this way.

The first pattern concerns those case where a nationality existed before the birth of the nation-state. For instance, the nation-state of Germany was first formed in 1871. Long before that year there was a German nationality. Although the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861 it was not until 1871 that the unified nation-state came into being. Long before the 1800s there were Germans and Italians.

In cases like this where the nationality historically came first, the word that means a person who is of that nationality simply takes the noun ending -o while the name of the nation takes the ending -io. Here are some examples:

THE NATION-STATE	A PERSON OF THAT NATIONALITY
Francio	Franco

Germanio	Germano
Ĉinio	Ĉino
Japanio	Japano
Italio	Italo
Rusio	Ruso

When it comes to other nations, such as the United States, the nationality did not exist before the country became independent. The United States is an example. In 1776 a new nation and a new nationality came into existence. The same kind of thing happened in other countries of the Americas. In these cases the name of the country simply takes the –o ending. Here, to form the name of a person of a certain nationality Esperanto uses the suffix –an which means "a member of." Here are examples:

NAME OF THE COUNTRY	NAME OF THE INHABITANT
Kanado	Kanadano
Argentino	Argentinano
Israelo	Israelano
Meksikio	Meksikiano
Indonezio	Indoneziano
Bolivio	Boliviano

Although this dual system in Esperanto is easier to learn than the lack of a system in English, many Esperantists claim that it would be easier still if all countries and nationalities were named according to a single system. Although the additional learning load is not as great as it is in English, it is greater than it needs to be.

European users of Esperanto largely decided this usage. They decided which category each country fits into. They put Korea into the second category and so called the country Koreo and the people of that nationality Koreano.

Today there is a strong Esperanto movement in the Republic of Korea. The Universala Kongreso was held in Seoul in 1994. Not long afterwards Dr. Lee Chong Yeong of South Korea was elected president of the Universala Esperanto-Asocio.

Korean Esperantists point out, quite rightly, that Korean culture and thus the Korean nationality is thousands of years old. It long preceded the construction of the modern state of The Republic of Korea. Therefore, the name of their country should be Koreio and the name of a person of that nationality should be Koreo.

While for many European Esperantists the word Koreo is the name of the country, in the country itself Koreo means "a Korean."

It would be simpler if the name of every country ended in –io and the name of the people of that nationality ended in –ano. It would save some study time for students of Esperanto and avoid unintentionally slighting Korean Esperantists.

Propagandists avoid discussing this kind of problem. Perhaps this is because they are measuring Esperanto against the standard of some kind of nonexistent perfect language, and they do not want to admit that in some ways Esperanto does not quite fit the bill.

Esperanto, of course, is not a perfect language. It is a real language with its own difficulties, its own idiosyncrasies, and yet it is a language which can be learned in a relatively short time and which works very well.

In my opinion the propagandists are short-sighted. If they were to make the case for Esperanto in a more balanced way perhaps they would attract more people, including those who are turned off when they sense that what they are hearing is overly one-sided.

However, a great many propagandists for Esperanto do not care to weigh pros and cons in a judicious manner. They prefer to maintain that what they propose is not merely a reasonable and workable solution to the problem of international communication but the only possible solution.

Perhaps the reason for this kind of behavior of the propagandists is the strong emotion they feel for the language, an emotion that touches them deep in their being. There is a strong sense of idealism that a great many Esperantists share. It is the idea that in a very important sense all humankind belongs to one family, and that if we were all to share one auxiliary language we would be better able to understand each other and find solutions to our many common problems. It was this idealism that inspired Zamenhof to create his plan for the language. It is this idealism that has led so many people from so many countries to invest the time and effort to learn and teach the language. This deep-rooted idealism has helped make possible the creation of a world-wide community that shares this common second language, a language that many of them refer to as "nia kara lingvo" (our dear language.)

Zamenhof called this idealism "the internal idea" of the language. Esperanto developed to do more than communicate facts, as important as that is. Esperanto grew as a means of bringing together the members of the one human family.

This powerful attachment to the language has, interestingly enough, led some Esperantists to turn away from the original dream of a universal auxiliary language. For these individuals the language is not a tongue that is destined to be used by everyone in the world but rather the particular language of a small but highly international community. These Esperantists are the Raumists.

An International Culture

In 1980 the annual International Congress of Young Esperantists was held in the small town of Rauma in Finland. There a group of young Esperantists drew up and signed a document called La Manifesto de Raŭmo (The Manifesto of Rauma). In it they stated that they were not interested in working to make Esperanto the international language for the whole world. That goal seemed to them to be quite unrealistic.

In renouncing Zamenhof's dream, at least for the present, they were not at all renouncing Esperanto itself. In the course of its history Esperanto has attracted adherents from all around the world. These adherents form an international community which share a common language and a well-developed literature. There is a name for that world-wide community: Esperantujo which could be translated as "Esperantoland." Esperantists correspond with each other, and get together in international gatherings that range from a few dozen participants to thousands of participants. When they meet they talk to each other, sing together, interact in all of the ways that people interact, all the while using their common language. Esperantists have created a large number of organizations based on a wide variety of interests. Esperantists today belong to a unique international culture.

The young Esperantists meeting in Rauma found value in that culture. They decided that they would prefer not to waste their efforts in trying to convince people who were indifferent to Esperanto, who made fun of Esperanto, who refused to take the language seriously as the

answer to the world language problem, the problem that arises because most people in the world cannot talk to each other because they do not understand each other's words. These young Esperantists said that their goal from this time on was to develop their language, their literature, their culture. They maintained that being an Esperantist, being part of this international culture, has value in itself whatever the position of the outside world might be. Esperanto makes it possible for people from different parts of the world to communicate with each other on a level of linguistic equality that is simply not possible when one person has to use another's language. That is highly valuable in and of itself.

Those who agree with the signers of the Manifesto of Rauma are now called Raumists. Raumists now hold important positions in Esperantujo. István Ertl, the editor of Esperanto, the official publication of the World Esperanto Organization, is on the editorial staff of Literatura Foiro (Literary Fair), the excellent literary review put out by a cooperative which holds to a Raumist position.

Esperantist authors worked to get their language accepted by PEN International, a prestigious organization of authors and editors from some sixty countries. PEN gives out literary awards and it protects the rights of authors to freedom of expression. The languages which are used in the meetings of PEN International are English, French and the language of the host country. The first time Esperantists tried to get an Esperanto chapter admitted into PEN they were turned down. The international writer's organization felt no need to admit a language whose goal was to become the universal language.

There are Esperanto writers who write in more than one language. One of these, István Nemery, is a best-selling novelist in his native Hungary. Nemery has written more than a hundred books in Hungarian but also more than a dozen books in Esperanto. With advocates like Nemery, who was already a member of PEN, Esperantists in the end convinced PEN to accept an Esperanto chapter just as it had accepted other languages, like Yiddish and Romany, which are not the languages of specific countries.

The Raumists point to this accomplishment to show that their approach is the one by which Esperanto will thrive. The Esperanto chapter was not accepted by PEN International because authors all over the world believed that this easy-to-learn language should be adopted for international use. It was accepted because it was the language of a particular culture and literature, a language in which poems and novels and essays and other forms of literature have been and are being produced. Today at meetings of PEN International Esperanto representatives take part just as representatives of other language groups take part. Like the other participants they speak in either English, French or the language of the host country. Here Esperanto does not have the special status that Esperantists have dreamed of. It is a language like any other, different from most only in that it is not the language of a particular country or countries but of an international community bound together by its common language.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Esperanto and Education

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This is the twenty-second chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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A couple of my favorite anecdotes about how hard it is to learn foreign languages has to do with Russian. One came in a letter to my daughter from a Russian pen-pal. Andrei had devoted many thousands of hours to studying and reading English. He had become interested in English as a boy, and because of all of the time that he had spent with the language he reached the point where he knew English at a very high level. Of course from time to time he would make little mistakes of the kind that foreigners make in a second language. However he wrote English with fewer errors than a great many native speakers whom I have taught.

One day he was visiting in Moscow, some five thousand miles west of his home in what was then the Soviet Far East. He saw a young foreign woman vainly trying to communicate something to a policeman. Andrei walked up to her and said in English, "May I be of assistance?"

"Oh, thank God!" she said. She was relieved to find someone who spoke English. She was a young American who had recently graduated from college and was taking a tour abroad. She had become separated from her tour group and did not know the way back to the hotel.

Andrei gave her directions and then asked if he might walk back with her so he could practice his English. She agreed and they had a nice conversation on the way.

Before he left her he asked her what her major in college had been.

It was Russian.

The second anecdote is told by Claude Piron in *Le défi des langues*. (PP. 57-58) One day Piron was in a bookstore when a woman asked the clerk for his opinion about a book. "What do you think?" she asked. "How much time would each lesson take?"

The clerk leafed through the book which was entitled *Le russe en 90 leçons* (Russian in 90 Lessons.) Then he suggested that she study one lesson each day, spending forty-five minutes or an hour on each lesson.

The woman immediately plunked down her money for the book and exclaimed, "Great! In three months I will know Russian!"

Piron said nothing. However, he quietly remembered how much time he had put into that language. First, he studied it on his own for two years. Then, as a university student, he took four years of Russian. After that he spent ten hours a day on Russian for a year at a highly prestigious school for translators at the University of Geneva. He went on to professionally translate Russian texts for many years at the United Nations and the World Health Organization. He translated a great many thousands of pages and listened to hundreds of speeches in the language. In spite of all of this he has to admit, "When I get the idea to read Solzhenitsyn or Pravda, there are entire passages which I do not understand: I need the dictionary."

And the woman in the bookstore thought she would know Russian in three months!

What would she know? Maybe she would be able to say "It is a nice day" and "Where is the restroom?" and things on that level. Certainly she would not be able to read an ordinary news article in a newspaper or describe her symptoms to a physician or watch a movie in Russian and understand what was going on.

In a great many countries including the United States there is a very large trade in books, tapes, CD-ROMs, videos and other paraphernalia that purport to teach foreign languages as easily as the woman in the bookstore anticipated learning Russian. None of the advertisements for this equipment suggest that the student should expect to invest an enormous amount of time in order to attain some useful knowledge of the language.

Throughout the United States students spend years studying their foreign languages, and yet very few of them ever reach the point where they are comfortable carrying on a normal conversation, writing a normal letter or reading articles in a newspaper or magazine. The vast majority of them have to admit to having had no practical benefit from their years of study other than some vague "appreciation" for the foreign language.

The cost-benefit ratio for all of this study is miniscule.

Many of these individuals think that there is something wrong with them, that they are somehow deficient in their ability to learn a foreign language either through self-study or by taking classes. They think they have some kind of block that ordinary people do not have.

In fact there is nothing at all wrong with them. It is as though they are victims of a gigantic hoax. Mastering a foreign language without spending a good amount of time in a country where that language is spoken is a very rare achievement. It takes an investment of a few thousand hours to get a firm working knowledge of a foreign language, and the knowledge thus attained is by no means equivalent to the knowledge of a native speaker. To reach the level that Andrei attained in English means spending a great many thousands of highly motivated hours with the foreign language.

The Case for Studying Esperanto

Compared with the number of people who speak the great national languages which are commonly taught in American schools, relatively few people speak Esperanto. It would obviously be very useful to know languages such as French or Spanish or Japanese, but the sad truth is that out of all of the millions of Americans who have invested even years of study in these languages very, very few really know them. Think of the people you know who have studied foreign languages, and then ask yourself how many of them can use a language that they studied in a normal way.

It used to be said that studying Latin was the hallmark of an educated person. Since tens of thousands of English words are of Latin derivation, studying Latin strengthened students' English vocabularies. In addition, it was claimed that the study of Latin taught students something about the way in which all languages work. Teachers maintained that Latin prepared students to successfully learn other foreign languages. They also insisted that studying Latin strengthened the mind by teaching students learn how to think.

Eventually schools and colleges dropped Latin as a requirement. The study of Latin demanded an enormous investment of time and energy because Latin carries the same kinds of learning burdens which have already been noted for languages such as French and English. Latin has a great many grammatical complexities and irregularities, endless paradigms of verb, noun and adjective endings that must be memorized, illogical idiomatic expressions that must be mastered, and so on.

If studying Esperanto were required for just one year, students with a reasonable amount of effort and motivation would gain many of these same benefits. Since much of the vocabulary of Esperanto is derived directly or indirectly from Latin, the study of Esperanto would strengthen students' English vocabularies. Since learning Esperanto shows students how languages are put together without burdening them with committing to memory enormous numbers of exceptions to rules, students would be able to become fluent in this relatively easy language. Once fluent in one language, they would be better prepared to grapple with more difficult languages. Because students of Esperanto are free to combine morphemes to create new words, they would gain practice in logically building and logically figuring out the meanings of complex words.

How Esperanto Generally Helps the Study of Foreign Languages

Most people would agree that it makes sense to master a new kind of activity in a simpler form before going on to tackle it in an extremely complicated form. Piano students learn to play scales and simple tunes long before they tackle sonatas. In a similar way it makes sense for students to learn an easier language before they go on to deal with a language whose complexities are much more demanding.

Let us assume that an American can gain a fair working knowledge of French by studying that language for four years in high school and two additional years in college. When Americans start the study of French, they face so many complexities that it takes a very long time before they can hope to speak fluently without making too many mistakes. Students have to learn the gender of each noun that they use. They have to master three or four kinds of regular verbs and many dozens of irregular verbs. They have to individually learn the various uses of each French preposition because these do not have any simple one-to-one equivalents with English counterparts. They have to memorize not only thousands of vocabulary items but also thousands of idiomatic expressions, phrases which make no sense at all when taken literally. And these are only some of the difficulties which they face.

They not only have to master this vast body of information in order to speak French fluently and correctly; they also have to have all of these items at their finger tips. In speaking the language, as opposed to writing or reading it, they cannot stop at every third word to look up the correct form.

It will be a very long time (if ever) before students have the experience of being anywhere nearly as comfortable using French as they are using their native tongue.

Students encounter difficulties on this same scale when they strive to learn other foreign languages.

But if the students were to first seriously study Esperanto for a year or so, they would know first hand what it is to be fluent in another language. Once they have the specific, concrete knowledge of what it is to effectively use this simpler, purely international tongue, they will be better prepared to undertake the study of a more complex national language. They will know in their bones what it means to master a second language.

In learning Esperanto they will encounter language in a grammatically and idiomatically stripped-down form, so to speak. They will encounter language without complex systems of verbal endings, without any irregular verbs, without a multitude of idiomatic expressions, without words that are spelled differently from the way they are pronounced, without genders of nouns or adjectives. Freed from all of these things to worry about, they will learn the language in a relatively short time. They will have in their own direct experience a clear model of what it is to know another language.

They will be able to correspond in that language, they will be able to read it, to speak it, to write it, and to understand it when they hear it. Not bothered by a host of complexities and exceptions, they will gain confidence in the area of languages. Then, having mastered the basic grammatical forms in a language that is not burdened with thousands of exceptions to the rules, they can go on and study languages which are more complex to learn. In fact their very success in learning Esperanto may motivate them to work to study more challenging languages.

One of the canards or misunderstandings about Esperanto from its earliest days is that the goal of Esperantists is a monolingual world where everyone speaks Esperanto and nothing else. In fact, examples abound of individuals who started their study of languages by mastering Esperanto and then went on to learn other languages as well.

William Harmon's Experience with Esperanto and Modern Languages

At the age of thirteen William Harmon happened to see an Esperanto book on the desk of one of his teachers. The language caught his interest and he studied it and soon mastered it.

This is how he answers the question, "Please compare the results and the benefits of your use of Esperanto with those of other languages":

"Esperanto has shaped my life. I have spent almost all of my adult years among Esperantists, using the language in many parts of the world. It has added a lot to my life; it has given me experiences and friends beyond value. I owe a great deal to Esperanto, certainly not as much to the other languages which I studied. Spanish has helped me a lot and it is helping me a lot; but speaking Spanish is not the same as being with fellow Esperantists, speaking our language. It is not easy to define the difference, but there certainly is a difference. When I was a sailor during World War II, my knowledge of Esperanto resulted in there being people — including charming young ladies — meeting me at the pier when my ship docked, and my shipmates envied me for that!"

(Note: Translated from an interview conducted in Esperanto by electronic mail.)

Three years after learning Esperanto, Harmon worked for two Alsatian Germans. From one he picked up a lot of Yiddish and from the other a lot of German. Although he does not now

remember the Yiddish very well, he later studied German more formally and is absolutely certain that his knowledge of Esperanto facilitated his learning German.

Most Americans are profoundly monoglot; that is, not only do they speak only a single language but they do not have a clear idea of what it is to speak more than one language. They understand that other languages have different sounds for the ideas that English words express, but they do not know that other grammars can be radically different from — and just as natural as — the grammar of English. They do not realize that while other languages do not have precise equivalents for many English words, they do have many words which exactly express concepts that can only be conveyed in English by means of descriptions or explanations.

Becoming a fluent Esperantist cured Harmon, as it has cured others, of this ingrained monolingualism.

William Harmon spent his professional career in the shipping business. In 1992 he retired as vice-president and General Manager of Pricing at Matson Navigation Company. During his working career Harmon lived three years in Japan where he learned how to speak the language through studying textbooks by himself and by practicing the language on the street. He learned how to read newspapers. To do this Harmon had to learn nearly two thousand kanji (Japanese ideographs.) He learned six a day, and eventually reached his goal.

Harmon is convinced that the mental flexibility which mastering Esperanto gave him was instrumental to his learning Japanese.

In addition to his other languages Harmon has acquired some French and he has learned how to understand some Brazilian Portuguese and Russian.

He has spoken Esperanto in scores of countries around the world including Algeria, Australia, Argentina, Austria, the Bahamas, Belarus, Belize, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia (before it split up), Denmark, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Venezuela, and Yugoslavia (before it split up), and he is still adding to this list.

Esperanto has enriched Harmon's life tremendously. Through Esperanto he has made friends all over the world. Learning Esperanto has made it easier for him to learn other languages as well.

Donald Broadribb's Experience with Esperanto and Ancient Languages

When Donald Broadribb was a twelve-year-old high school student in Rochester, New York, he came across a 32-page booklet on Esperanto. One day, out of boredom, he started doing the lessons. He located a very old textbook in the public library and with these sources taught himself the language. Because Broadribb learned Esperanto by himself without the help of any teacher, he felt that the language really was his.

Esperanto opened up the world for this high school student. After some months of study he found that he was able to read novels and other books in Esperanto. He went on to exchange

many hundreds of letters with Esperantists all over the world. Some of the countries in which his correspondents lived were Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Mexico, The Netherlands, New Zealand, the Soviet Union (before it split up), Spain and Sweden. Later, when he edited Esperanto publications he communicated with people in many other countries as well.

Broadribb made more progress in Esperanto after less than one year's study by himself than he was able to make in French or Spanish in spite of taking classes in these languages for respectively four and eight years.

This is how he answers the question, "Did your learning Esperanto make it easier for you to learn other languages?"

"Absolutely yes. Because of the freedom that the grammar of Esperanto provides and the many ways of expressing yourself (an outstanding characteristic of Esperanto), I quickly got used to using different sorts of word order, and I was delighted to use grammatical structures which I had not encountered in English. It was also a matter of the structure of words in Esperanto, not just the grammatical elements. It is as though while having fun I learned the fundamental character of languages and at the same time acquired a useful language which was a pleasure to use."

(Note: Translated from an interview conducted in Esperanto by electronic mail.)

Broadribb studied German in college. An interest in philosophy led him to study ancient Greek, and he spent a year reading through the complete works of Plato in the original Greek. In order to deepen his understanding of Greek he translated sections of Plato into Esperanto. Although these early translations have long since been lost, many decades later Broadribb came out with a prize-winning Esperanto translation of Plato's Republic.

When Broadribb was a student at Union Theological Seminary, he majored in Biblical Hebrew, and he studied Koine, the Greek dialect in which the New Testament was written. He learned Aramaic, the language which Jesus spoke, and a related Semitic language, Ugaritic. He has translated ancient Ugaritic epics into both Esperanto and English.

He acquired a doctorate at the University of Melbourne in Australia where his dissertation dealt with the linguistic nature of ancient Hebrew poetry. He went on to teach Hebrew and Aramaic at this university.

Broadribb estimates that he has studied some thirty or forty languages. He says that he was not a "natural" when it comes to learning languages and that, other than Esperanto, he has never been able to speak another language really well. However, his mastering Esperanto gave him the confidence to handle languages and he went on to work with a number of ancient tongues on the highest professional level.

The experiences of individuals like Harmon and Broadribb show how Esperanto can lead to an immense widening of students' linguistic horizons.

(Note: Donald Harlow's experiences with Esperanto may be read in The Esperanto Book which you can reach through his home page at:

<http://www.webcom.com/~donh/esperanto.html>

This page provides a good link to other people's personal experience with Esperanto.)

How Esperanto Specifically Helps the Study of Certain Foreign Languages

Russian is closely related to Polish. Both languages are Slavic languages. If Russians want to learn Polish or Poles want to learn Russian, they are in an ideal position to do so because so many elements of the two languages are very similar or even identical. A similar situation exists with the Romance languages, Spanish and Italian. These languages are so close to each other that speakers of Spanish and speakers of Italian are able to communicate at a certain level when each speaks their own language.

For native speakers of English, Romance languages such as French or Spanish are not this accessible. Before beginning a Romance language, the speaker of English would find the study of Esperanto especially helpful because three quarters of Esperanto words are derived from Latin roots. Here are a few examples of similarity between Esperanto and French words, along with their English meanings:

Esperanto	French	English Meaning
ankoraŭ	encore	still, yet
dormi	dormir	to sleep
hieraŭ	hier	yesterday
kontroli	controller	to check (not "to control")
larĝa	large	wide (not "large")
parkeri	par coeur	to learn by heart
truo	trou	hole

A complete list of such words would include thousands of items.

In today's world English is the dominant language. It is used in international gatherings throughout the world. English is recognized as the language of science, of business and of aviation. Native speakers of English have an enormous advantage in international meetings because they can speak their own tongue instead of a hard-to-learn foreign language. Many who are not native speakers of English devote many hundreds and even thousands of hours in an attempt to become fluent in this dominant language. Mastering English would give them great advantages over their compatriots who have not attained this fluency. However, because of the enormous numbers of irregularities in English, the vast majority of foreign students never reach the point where they are correctly fluent in the language. A well-known quip has it that the international language of scientific conferences (and of many other kinds of conferences as well) is broken English.

If those whose native languages are not related to English were to study Esperanto first, this would help them do better with the dominant language. Asians who first studied Esperanto would encounter grammatical elements that are also found in English but not in their own tongues. By learning these elements in a pure form in Esperanto, without a host of bewildering exceptions, they would more easily master them.

For a speaker of Chinese, these elements include tense, case and number. Chinese verbs do not have special forms to show that an event took place in the past or will take place in the future. Chinese nouns do not have a plural ending. The Chinese student of Esperanto can master these strange linguistic features relatively easily because all verbs can be put into the future by adding -os to the stem and because all nouns can be made plural by adding -j.

Later, when the Chinese student grapples with English, these basic concepts will have been fully internalized. Only then will the student have to deal with exceptions, with verbs like "must" that cannot be put into the future and nouns like "man" that cannot be made plural in the regular way by adding the ending -s.

For a great many Asiatic students it will be a relatively simple matter to move from most Esperanto words to their English counterparts because of the vast number of similarities in vocabulary between the two languages. Here are just a very few of thousands of words which are similar in both Esperanto and English:

ESPERANTO	ENGLISH	ESPERANTO	ENGLISH
aŭtomobilo	automobile	nesto	nest
birdo	bird	oceano	ocean
blua	blue	planedo	planet
cirklo	circle	purpura	purple
elefanto	elephant	sofo	sofa
ĝangalo	jungle	suno	sun
komo	comma	tablo	table
linio	line	telefono	telephone
movi	to move	tuŝi	to touch
muso	mouse	verbo	verb

The study of Esperanto will also prove useful to native speakers of English who wish to expand their English vocabulary because so many Esperanto words are similar to the Latin words that form the roots of complex English terms.

Here are some common Esperanto words, their meaning in English, and less common English words to which they are related.

Esperanto	English	Less Common English Word
dormi	to sleep	dormancy (as if asleep, in a state of suspended animation)
filo	son	filiation (relation of a child to its parent; forming a new branch of a society)
folio	leaf	foliaceous (having leaves)
fulmo	thunder	fulminate (to shout out denunciations, decrees, etc.)
salti	to jump	saltation (a sudden change, movement or development, as if by leaping; mutation)
viro	man	virile (manly, male)
voki	to call	invocation (to call on God, the muses, a saint etc. for support or a blessing or help)

Learning the vocabulary of Esperanto helps enormously with learning the vocabulary of English or of a Romance language. Similarly, already knowing English or a Romance language makes learning the vocabulary of Esperanto especially easy.

The Cost-Benefit Ratio of Studying Esperanto First

Some interesting experiments have been carried out regarding the propaedeutic value of Esperanto, that is, the value of learning Esperanto as an aid to mastering other languages. Such experiments have involved students studying Esperanto for one year before undertaking the study of English, German, Latin or Russian. The results of such studies show that the prior

experience of these students with Esperanto enables them to reach a specified level of mastery of their new language at least one year faster than comparable students who had not studied Esperanto. That is, given two groups of students, one of which studied Esperanto for a year and the other language for, say three years, and the second of which studied the other language for, say, four years, the students who had studied Esperanto were at least at the same level in the other language as those students who had devoted their full time to that language. In the same amount of time one group had learned two languages, the other only one. In this scenario learning Esperanto first involves no net loss of time, with many other benefits accruing as an added bonus.

Chapter Twenty-Three

The Resistance to Esperanto

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This is the twenty-third chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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As the second millennium comes to a close the situation regarding Esperanto is rather curious. The propagandists for Esperanto make the case that there are millions of Esperantists around the world, that the movement for this easy-to-learn international language is growing and that someday there will come "la fina venko," the final victory, when Esperanto will be universally recognized as the international auxiliary language for the whole world. Everywhere people will study Esperanto for a year or two and everywhere in the world people will be able to freely communicate directly with each other with no need for intermediaries. The faith of hundreds of thousands of Esperantists and of supporters of Esperanto is still strong.

On the other hand there are the Raumists and those like them who are happy to participate in a unique vibrant international culture. This culture has participants in more than a hundred countries around the world. It produces a constant stream of books and magazines and literary journals and newsletters and postal letters and electronic messages, as well as a few regular radio programs that come from countries like China, Cuba, Poland, Austria and the Vatican.

Esperanto Ignored

Now, near the turn of the second millennium, for most people throughout the world this unique is invisible. A great many people do not even know what Esperanto is. Many of those who have heard of it think it is an old-fashioned idea that died out long ago. If anyone were to inform them that an excellent 365-age computer dictionary in Esperanto appeared in 1995, they would find that almost as strange as if they were to learn of a new computer dictionary written in Anglo-Saxon.

Except for a flurry of attention during the language's centennial year in 1987, Esperanto has received almost no notice from the American mass media in recent decades. A search of a magazine article database in the United States in 1996 showed a handful of articles. One dealt with postage stamps devoted to Esperanto. Another, which appeared in *The Atlantic* in October, 1995, dealt with lost causes. This latter contained an insert with some favorable information about Esperanto. Articles do appear from time to time in newspapers, and these are carefully noted in *Esperanto USA*, the official publication of the Esperanto League for North America.

Esperanto Ridiculed

Often when Esperanto is mentioned by otherwise well-informed people in the media, it is in the form of an off-hand quip that assumes Esperanto is not a "real" language but rather some sort of an antiquated, odd-ball impractical dream that never really worked and that never could work.

A certain number of those who have heard of the language and know a little bit about it demonstrate a powerful antipathy towards it. Some rail against the language. Many mock it. This has been going on for a very long time.

Esperantists believe there is a world language problem and that it consists of this: The overwhelming majority of the people on this earth cannot speak to each other or correspond with each other without employing a translator.

It is fashionable, at least in the United States, not to see this as a big problem. Many native speakers of English think that there is something wrong with all of the people in the world who do not speak English. In 1988, just before the Olympic Games were to be held in Seoul, a journalist from one of the Detroit newspapers visited the Republic of Korea and reported back that it was a strange place. Among the odd features of Korean culture that this reporter noted, along with the fact that some people ate dog meat, was that the people there did not speak English.

A monolingual American woman travelling in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, decided to leave her tour group and go off exploring the city on her own. When she needed to ask directions she could find no one who could speak English. When she spoke to people they looked at her and shrugged their shoulders. They could not help. In other words, she got the same reception that a person who spoke only Czech would receive on the streets of a typical American city. When this kind of thing happens to Americans, many of them are shocked.

It is obvious that nobody can master all of the major languages of the world. It is easily demonstrable that the methods now commonly used for oral communication between those who speak different native languages impede the spontaneous flow of information which people enjoy when they talk to each other in their native language. It would make sense to at least seriously consider a remedy that has been proving itself in practice for more than a century. However, an enormous number of people dismiss that remedy without even ten minutes of serious consideration. This has proved to be enormously frustrating to fluent Esperantists who know from their own experience how well the language works.

The story of Claude Piron is instructive in this regard. As a boy in neutral Switzerland during World War II, Piron came across some old copies of a magazine for boys. The magazines contained a number of Esperanto lessons. From them Piron taught himself the language and then he taught it to his brother and a number of his schoolmates, and they used the language as their own secret language. One of his schoolmates learned Esperanto in just one month.

Later Piron learned that there were other Esperantists. He corresponded with Esperantists in many other countries including China. This stimulated his interest in languages, and he learned, among other languages, English, Russian and Chinese. As has been noted, he became a professional translator and a supervisor of translations at the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

Piron knew first hand how difficult it is to translate from one national language to another. He knew how a great deal of what was said by speakers was necessarily omitted by interpreters

who were rushed for time. He listened while interpreters made up speeches out of whole cloth when they could not understand the pronunciation of a speaker who was required to use an extremely difficult foreign language in an international gathering.

From time to time Piron mentioned to other translators that if Esperanto were universally taught and used, these problems would disappear.

His suggestions about using Esperanto were uniformly met with ridicule.

From his own experience Piron knew that Esperanto worked very well. When he travelled abroad to serve as a translator, he looked up local Esperantists. He communicated with people in Asia and America as well as in Europe, writing Esperanto, speaking Esperanto. People sang in Esperanto and they joked in Esperanto and they published books and magazines in Esperanto, and professionals in the field of translation ridiculed the very idea of the language.

When everyone around you is treating you as though you are crazy, doubts about your own sanity start to creep in. That happened to Piron. While he was working at the United Nations in New York, he decided to consult a highly recommended local psychotherapist. After listening to him the psychotherapist told him that he would have to check the matter out.

When they met again Piron was told, to his relief, that he was not crazy at all but that the people who were ridiculing Esperanto, dismissing it out of hand, were the ones who were acting crazy.

This incident sparked an interest in psychotherapy in Claude Piron. Eventually it led him to a successful second career as a psychotherapist. He now practices psychotherapy in his native Switzerland. He has done marriage counseling and psychotherapy in his native French, in English and in Esperanto. He finds Esperanto to be a language very well suited for communicating nuances of meaning, of feeling, not only in ordinary discourse and in literature, but also in psychotherapeutic sessions.

Actually Piron would rather not use the term "psychotherapist." He would rather call himself a plifeliĝigisto.

pli	=	more
feliĉ	=	happy
ig	=	make
ist	=	a professional person
o	=	[noun marker]

By plifeliĝigisto Piron means someone whose profession it is to help other people become happier. Most of the people who consult him are not mentally ill. They just want to become happier.

Because Piron has full professional qualifications in both the field of translation and the field of psychotherapy, he is in a good position to consider why a large number of otherwise perfectly normal individuals reject Esperanto out of hand without first spending as much as an hour examining the facts about the language. He has written essays and, in 1994, a book, *Le défi des langues* (The Challenge of the Languages) about the psychological resistance to Esperanto.

[Note: The English version of his essay "Psychological Reactions to Esperanto", translated from French by William Auld, may be read at:

<http://www.districto.com/esperanto/psyres.htm>

A Spanish translation (based on Auld) may be read at:

<http://www.dragonfire.net/~Esperanto/psicresp.htm>

This is why Piron believes there is so much resistance to Esperanto:

When we start to speak at about eighteen months, the big people around us are enchanted and amazed and delighted. We say "Mama," and Mother grins and makes a wonderful fuss. Our first words have a magical effect on the loving giants around us.

We rapidly become articulate in our native language. We progress from single words to two-word expressions to whole sentences to compound sentences to complex sentences. All of this takes place long before we spend a day at school. Our progress continues to have a magical effect on our parents. Not only are they delighted when we speak but we discover that we can at least sometimes get them to do things for us by asking for them. We can tell them what we want. Articulating our desires often leads to our parents fulfilling those desires, whether they be getting some ice cream or getting a favorite video put on or acquiring a certain toy.

Most of us learn our native language by talking with our mothers. Our native language literally becomes our "mother tongue." Because this mother tongue gives us powers which appear magical, it becomes precious to us on a deep psychological level. It becomes definitely something not to be monkeyed with.

When someone suggests reforming spelling, protests come loud and clear. That would be monkeying with our precious mother tongue. If someone were to suggest that we simplify the grammar of our native language, for example, by making the irregular verb "to be" regular so that it would be conjugated like this:

I be

you be

he bes

she bes

it bes

we be

you be

they be,

this suggestion would be met with outrage. Even though language historians show that hundreds of less common irregular verbs in English became regular between Chaucer's time and the eighteenth century, any suggestion that we deliberately and consciously reinstate this process would be greeted with dismay or ridicule.

(If you doubt this, say things like "He haves a nice car" or "She bes a good student" or "He sitted down and eated his food" and, when people correct you, explain that you have decided to treat all verbs as regular verbs.)

This is because our native language, our mother tongue, the language we learned at our mother's knee, the language which when we first learned it conferred upon us magical-seeming powers, is taboo to fundamentally change.

We do not think about this consciously. We think about this on a deep level beneath the level of consciousness. We just know that it's so. Hands off our language!

We are willing to adapt new means of transportation. In the last two centuries with relatively little resistance and with a great deal of excitement we accepted railroads, automobiles, airplanes and spaceships. We are proud of the way that we have reengineered means of transportation. However, let someone suggest that we reengineer our native language, which is our main means of communication, and we abhor such suggestions as unthinkable.

On the one hand there are practical reasons for this. If we were to radically change our native language we would be cutting future generations off from reading the literature of the past with the same ease that we enjoy. Even now we read the works of Shakespeare not with his spelling but with a thoroughly modernized spelling. If we were to switch to a completely phonetic system of writing English, future generations would have great difficulty reading the works of, say, Mark Twain, except in versions with radically altered spelling.

English is the native language or an official language of a large number of countries world-wide. The language is pronounced differently in different countries. If each country spelled English phonetically according to the local pronunciation, it would be more difficult for us to read the written output of the other lands.

Similar points could be made about changing other features of the language.

When Esperanto is suggested as a solution for the world language problem, this activates the taboo for many individuals. A hundred years ago a young man, starting his work as a teenager, developed the plan for a language so that people all over the world could use that language to communicate easily among themselves. Suppose that the Esperanto dream were to be carried out. What would that mean?

All over the world billions of people would be communicating in a language based on a plan thought up by one man. When people would write technical manuals or put out other publications for world-wide distribution they would normally use the language which he and others developed from his plan. When speeches would be made in international gatherings, they would be made or translated in his language. His language would become more widely used than any other. It would, from a certain point of view, attain a status higher than any other, including the languages which we learned at our mothers' knees.

Such a thought is unthinkable to many individuals. This is the way they think: This so-called language could not be a real language. It could not move us as deeply as the language we learned at our mothers' knees. It is an intrusive language. It is a Frankenstein monster of a language! It should be rejected out of hand, without even being looked at. It should be dismissed without looking to see how people actually use it.

If someone like Piron brings up Esperanto, such people will simply ridicule his impossible suggestion. That is the best way to get rid of it, because if they were ever to do a cost-benefit analysis that would compare how Esperanto works with how English works, with how French works, with how simultaneous translation works, with how consecutive translation works, they would have to face the possibility that billions of hours of language study and billions of dollars in less-than-accurate translation are wasted each year because of a refusal to consider what would be gained by adopting Esperanto as a world-wide auxiliary language.

A large number of people do not want to even look at the facts. According to Piron they suffer from a neurosis. This is not a neurosis on the individual level, but, rather, a psycho-social neurosis, what Piron calls the Babel syndrome. Like any neurosis it would quickly fade away if those who suffer from it were to directly confront what they feared. Like any neurosis it protects itself by maintaining itself at a subconscious level. Like many neuroses it entails enormous costs.

Chapter Twenty-Four

A Unique Language for the Whole World

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This is the twenty-fourth chapter of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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Some years ago, when I was relatively new to Esperanto, I had a few conversations with a man, whose name I have now forgotten, about so-called artificial languages. This individual had investigated both Esperanto and Interlingua, a language which made its debut in 1951. He had noticed something interesting about the people who were seeking correspondents in the two languages. Those whose requests appeared in the Interlingua magazine were all scholars and professional people while those whose requests appeared in various Esperanto publications came from all walks of life.

In some parts of the world where many different languages are spoken in a relatively small area it is common for ordinary people to be able to communicate, at least to some degree, in more than one language. However, in large countries, where there is just one predominant official language, ordinary people normally are monolingual. Studying a foreign language is seen as a kind of "frill." Learning a foreign language is the mark of an educated person. Really mastering a foreign language is seen as "a real tour de force," the mark of a highly educated individual.

Zamenhof did not devise Esperanto only for those who were in a position to invest a great deal of time and money to study a second language. He wanted ordinary people to be able to master the new language in a reasonable amount of time. He wanted not only those who owned and managed companies to be able to converse with their fellows in other lands but their skilled and unskilled employees as well. Zamenhof succeeded in making his language that easy to learn.

People who are seeking correspondents in Esperanto do come from all walks of life. In the September, 1995 issue of the Quarterly Bulletin of the American Association of Teachers of Esperanto there appeared a list of a few dozen individuals and groups looking for correspondents. The editor compiled her list from six sources. Those on the list include:

A 25-year-old Austrian woman whose special interest was dancing.

A 39-year-old Hungarian teacher who wanted to correspond with people in her age group throughout the world.

A 10-year-old French boy who wanted to write to other boys and exchange stamps and post cards with them.

A 19-year-old chemistry major in a Cuban University who wanted to correspond with young people in the United States.

A Mongolian teacher of Esperanto who needed correspondents for his students.

A student in Togo who wanted to correspond with young people in other countries.
A 22-year-old Algerian who wanted to exchange stamps and Esperanto magazines.
A group of Lithuanian students from 13 to 25 years of age who wanted to correspond about music, sports, nature, photography and other subjects.

There were listings from nineteen countries: Algeria, Austria, China, Cuba, France, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Mongolia, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Tanzania, Togo and Ukraine.

It is a perfectly ordinary kind of list of people who want to correspond in Esperanto. This kind of list shows that Esperanto attracts ordinary people as well as poets, novelists, linguists and other scholars and professional people.

Leafing through a few 1995 issues of the biweekly publication *Eventoj* which is published in Hungary for a world-wide audience I found, among others, listings for

A Libyan who wanted to correspond with Esperantists throughout the world
A 42-year-old translator who "values everything that is conducive to good health, beauty and nobility" and wanted to correspond with like-minded people throughout the world
A Brazilian married couple in their fifties and sixties who wanted to correspond with a Hungarian family about life, the word of God and the Esperanto movement
A 61-year-old Brazilian doctor who wanted to correspond with Hungarians
A 70-year-old Czech retiree

The involvement of ordinary people who want to correspond with people in other countries and on other continents has led some to dismiss Esperanto as being just a nice little hobby for pen-pals.

Esperanto is, of course, a nice little hobby for pen pals. Esperanto is also a language for Nobel Prize winners. Esperanto is also a language in which a great body of world literature has appeared in translation. Esperanto is a language of poets and novelists, of literary journals, of international meetings which draw hundreds and thousands of participants. Esperanto is the language of a world-wide culture.

Esperanto is a unique phenomenon in the entire history of mankind in that it is the only planned language that has attracted a sizable world-wide community of users, a kind of a global village. The members of this global village are dispersed throughout a hundred lands. They communicate with each other in the language which they learned specifically for that purpose.

To make up some sort of a language is not an extraordinary thing. There are children who have made up a private language which they use to speak among themselves. Recently I met a woman who still speaks the language which she made up as a child whenever she gets together with her old friends at school reunions.

Zamenhof's work in devising a plan for a new language intended to be used worldwide was not unique. A German priest, Johann Martin Schleyer, presented his plan for a language called Volapük in 1879. A large number of people learned the new language, and in 1889, two years after Esperanto made its debut, the Third Volapük International Congress was held entirely in Volapük in Paris. There were hundreds of Volapük clubs throughout the world and seven journals appeared in the language. However, Volapük faded quickly. Its grammar was regular but very complex. Schleyer quarreled with some of the chief proponents of his language because they wanted to simplify it. Perhaps a few dozen people speak it today.

[Note: Large, Andrew, 1987. The Artificial Language Movement, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 64-71]

Many people besides Schleyer and Zamenhof have set forth plans for international languages. Many of these were intended to be improvements on Esperanto. Here are the names of a few such languages which came out in the decade before World War I: Perio (1904), Lingua internacional (1905), Ekselsioro (1906), Lingwo internaciona (Antido) (1907), Romanizat (1908), Romanal (1909), Reform-Esperanto de Hugon (1910), lingw Adelfenzal (1911), Esperanto de Stelzner (1912).

[Note: Large, Andrew, op. cit. p137.]

Such plans still keep popping up from time to time.

A few planned languages other than Esperanto have seen a certain amount of use. Interlingua was devised so that people who already knew English or a Romance language would be able to read it with very little help. Publications have appeared in this language, including translations of many books of the Bible, and it has been used to provide summaries of scientific papers. Ido had a large number of users before World War II, but then it became moribund. Of all of the planned languages only Esperanto has maintained the status of the language of a sizable world-wide community.

One of the reasons why Esperanto has survived and flourished is its unique combination of conservatism and creativity. From very early on Zamenhof saw that a language that was constantly changing in a radical way had very little chance for survival. He therefore persuaded the first Universala Kongreso, back in 1905, to adopt La Fundamento de Esperanto with its sixteen basic grammatical rules, its glossary of a few thousand items, and its "Ekzercaro," which consists of about 5000 words of model prose, as the untouchable foundation of the language. Except for the constrictions of the basic rules, and the inability to do away with the fundamental vocabulary and the turns of speech demonstrated in the Ekzercaro, the community of users was free to adopt new words, including synonyms for the established ones, and new turns of speech as desired. Because this community of users was the highest authority in the language, its members sensed that Esperanto belonged to them and that it was not something being imposed on them by some higher authority. At the same time, because the foundation of the language was unchangeable, users could feel confident that the basic rules and vocabulary that they had learned would never become suddenly obsolete.

Because continuity was assured by the adoption of the Fundamento as the basis for the language, writers were encouraged to create a sizable body of original literary work and translations, and people who learned the language had confidence communicating in it whether orally, as when traveling, or in correspondence.

Another reason for the survival of Esperanto was what Zamenhof called its internal idea, the idealistic belief that all people, including ordinary people all over the world, should be able to communicate with each other easily in a language which they could learn in a reasonable amount of time. This idealistic vision proved very powerful in attracting hundreds of thousands of people who learned the language and even more who supported it.

A third reason for the success of Esperanto was the unique combination of features which the language enjoyed:

Esperanto is completely phonetic.
Esperanto has one simple way of conjugating all of its verbs.

Esperanto lets its users combine small words (morphemes) to create new words as they like as long as the resulting words make sense.

Esperanto lets its users use any word as a noun, a verb, an adjective or an adverb simply by utilizing the appropriate ending.

Esperanto lets its users change the transitivity of any verb by using the appropriate suffix, -ig or -iĝ.

Esperanto lets its users bring in new words whenever those words have obtained wide international usage. The single proviso is that the new words have to conform to the Esperanto system of spelling.

Esperanto makes it easy to identify words as being nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, direct objects and so on by means of easy-to-spot endings.

Esperanto has been described as "a linguistic experiment on a grand scale." It is more than that. It is a language that rose from the status of a boy's dream to that of being the language of a world-wide community with a large body of literature in less than a century.

But Esperanto is too important to be left to the Esperantists.

Esperanto has the potential, were it universally taught for a year or two in schools throughout the world, to enable ordinary people to communicate fluently world-wide on a scale surpassing that on which the linguistically brilliant now communicate. Esperanto offers the opportunity to improve communication in business, diplomacy, scholarship and other fields so that those who speak many different native languages will be able to participate fluently in international conferences and chat comfortably with each other after the formal presentations are made. Nowadays that privilege is often restricted to native speakers of English and those who have special talents and opportunities for learning English as a foreign language.

Esperanto offers the potential of saving a great many billions of dollars which are now being spent on translators and interpreters, billions which would be freed up to serve the purposes of the governments and organizations that now spend so much of their resources to change words from one language into the words another. For instance, instead of the World Health Organization devoting enormous sums to making translations, it would be able to devote those huge amounts of money to improving the health of stricken populations throughout the world. Alternatively, the budgets of organizations could shrink, relieving tax payers of an enormous although largely hidden burden.

It might be argued that some day an even better international language than Esperanto will be devised, but today Esperanto stands alone as a language which has been devised for international use and has been tested successfully for such use for more than a century. Esperanto is not a perfect language but it is a language that has been used perfectly well for international use. This can be seen at the annual Universal Congresses and at other meetings at which Esperanto-speakers from different countries gather. Such meetings are held every day of the year.

We can choose to do away with the Babel syndrome and take an honest, conscious look at Esperanto. We can choose to make cost-benefit analyses of the efficacy of adopting Esperanto for general international use. The sooner that we do this, the sooner the members of the global village can be comfortable directly communicating with one another.

Appendix and Bibliography

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This is the appendix and bibliography of a work-in-progress, *Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village* by Sylvan Zaft.

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Appendix

How You Can Join This Global Village

The language is available. The Esperantists have kept it alive. They have for more than a century proved that it works. This language is a gift offered to the world by its initiator, its developers, its users. Adopting it for world-wide use would empower any two human beings who meet each other in person, by paper mail, by electronic messages, to communicate directly with each other without needing a translator. This would be a step to transforming the world into an enormous global village.

If you are willing to study hard for some months so you can join the smaller global village that currently exists and be able to communicate directly with individuals all over the world, with people who have not mastered your native language and whose native languages you have not mastered, you can get started in these ways:

You can take a free ten-lesson postal course.

You can take a free ten-lesson course by means of electronic mail.

You can get a book and teach yourself.

You can take a class.

For information about books and about classes in the United States you can contact the Esperanto League of North America (ELNA)

To find information about Esperanto in thirty-one languages that will lead you to similar information for other countries, go to esperanto.net

An online course in English

An online course in French

An online course in German

An online course in Chinese

To take an online course in Russian e-mail Andrej ANANJIN aaa@junior.msk.su

To take an online course in Spanish e-mail Hector CAMPOS GREZ strigo@entelchile.net

An online course in Portuguese

An online course in Italian

An online course in Swedish

An online course in Finnish

Textbooks in Albanian, Basque, Bengal, Breton, Bulgarian, Catalan, Czech, Chinese, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Maltese, Mongolian, Norwegian, Occitan, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Sinhalese, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Turkish, Urdu and Welsh can be purchased from the Universala Esperanto-Asocio. You can e-mail them at uea@inter.NL.net.

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