

DISCOVER ESPERANTO



A FASCINATING LANGUAGE



iiei

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Dear reader,

Have you ever wanted to tell someone about a good movie, an interesting book, or something else you like? That's why we want to tell you about Esperanto. We're fans of the language, so we'd like other people to know about it too and discover how good it is for international communication.

"We" are people from various countries who regularly use Esperanto to connect across national borders. We're also active in the organizations that collaborated to produce this booklet: E@I and ILEI, both described on page 7.

The booklet has seven sections. We start with some basic information about Esperanto. Then there's a quick introduction to the language itself. The third section contains the personal stories of some Esperanto speakers. The fourth part briefly describes the work of L. L. Zamenhof, the man who gave Esperanto its basic structure. In the fifth section, a psychologist discusses Esperanto and international communication from a psychological angle. Then we answer some frequently asked questions about Esperanto. And we end with some details of the Esperanto movement in English-speaking countries.

As we've said, we're fans of Esperanto, and if this booklet piques your interest in this fascinating language, we'll be delighted.

Happy reading!

The E@I team

PS: After reading this booklet, you may like to read some news about Esperanto. If so, take a look at www.aktuale.info.

aktuale.info



This booklet has been translated from the original Esperanto version.

Design and format: Stano Marček.

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Basic information about Esperanto

Esperanto is a language, just like other human languages. You can express feelings and thoughts in Esperanto the same way as in other languages. You can sing songs in Esperanto, write poetry, quarrel, fall in love, gossip, tell jokes, play games, console a friend, have a scientific discussion, and so on and so forth.

People don't just speak Esperanto, they write it too. Here are some examples:

- ◆ Esperanto estas lingvo. (Esperanto is a language.)
- ◆ Ni havas revon. (We have a dream.)
- ◆ La suno brilas. (The sun is shining.)
- ◆ Ĉu vi vidas min? (Do you see me?)
- ◆ Jes, mi vidas vin. (Yes, I see you.)
- ◆ Mi amas vin! (I love you!)

National and ethnic languages belong to specific groups of people. For example, Hungarian belongs to the Hungarians, Portuguese belongs to the Brazilians and the Portuguese, Japanese belongs to the Japanese, and so on.

It's different with Esperanto. Esperanto doesn't belong to any particular nation or people – it belongs to everyone who has learned it, regardless of where they come from or where they live. Esperanto is not a national language, but an *international* language with speakers in every part of the world.

Esperanto's main aim is to simplify contact and communication between people who don't share a native or national language. In our experience, the Esperanto language is particularly suitable for use in global communication by "ordinary people" who have an interest in other countries and cultures.



"For me, Esperanto is a wonderful language for keeping in touch with friends in many countries and for working on international projects."

Peter Baláž
coordinator of E@I

Esperanto's basic structure was designed by one man, L. L. Zamenhof. He created it with great care and imagination, drawing his inspiration from national languages. It took him about ten years. Only when he felt that the language had acquired its own "spirit" did he deem it ready to be presented to the general public. That happened in 1887 with the publication of a booklet called *Lingvo Internacia* (International Language).

In his booklet, Zamenhof used the pseudonym *Doktoro Esperanto* (Doctor Hoping), but the word Esperanto later became the name of the language itself. In the following years, the booklet circulated among language enthusiasts and idealists in many countries who learned the language and began using it for global communication. That's how Esperanto evolved,

little by little, from one man's project into a living international language. Today, Esperanto is used and admired by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people worldwide.

It seems incredible that a one-man project could have developed into a living international language that so many people enjoy using, doesn't it? Well, this booklet gives a brief explanation of how and why that happened. It also shows you how Esperanto is used around the world today. Read on, and you'll soon know more about *Lingvo Internacia* (Esperanto's original name).



L. Zamenhof (1859-1917), founder of Esperanto

Where is Esperanto used?

People use Esperanto every day in various ways: when travelling, at international conferences, on the Internet, for work, or in family life.

"I use Serbian with my children, English for my studies, Swedish in society, and Esperanto at work and with my husband. All languages have their pros and cons. Of the four languages I use every day, Esperanto is the one in which I feel most comfortable."



Sonja Petrović Lundberg,
coordinator of www.lernu.net

Normally Esperanto is used between people who don't have the same mother tongue. When used in this way, Esperanto acts as a "bridge language" between people from different language backgrounds. That's Esperanto's strength – it works well as a bridge or a sort of glue, bringing people together across national borders. One way to use Esperanto is to go to an international Esperanto event, where people from various countries get together. Many Esperanto speakers enjoy attending such gatherings where they can chat, swap ideas, sing, dance, and go on excursions with people from other countries. You'll see some examples of this kind of event later in this booklet.



Another way to use Esperanto is to travel to a foreign country and stay for free in the home of an Esperanto speaker. When you stay with ordinary people in a foreign country, you tend to get a better picture of that country's lifestyle and customs than you would if you stayed in a hotel. *Pasporta Servo* (Passport Service) is a network of Esperanto speakers who are happy to provide such accommodation. It contains roughly 1200 addresses in more than 90 countries.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of Pasporta Servo is that you don't need to plan a whole lot with it. You can just decide to go where you want, as the mood strikes you.

Amanda Higley, from the USA,

who travelled through Europe for sixteen months and paid for only three nights' lodging.



A third way to use Esperanto is to correspond with speakers by post or on the Internet – a quick and easy way to contact people in other countries.

The Internet removes physical distance, and Esperanto removes 'language distance'. So the Internet and Esperanto make a great pair for international communication!

Henning Sato von Rosen,
one of the founders of E@I

Some Esperanto speakers use the language to actively promote a better, more peaceful world. There are those who use it to read news about events in various countries, written by the very people who live in those countries. And others enjoy books that were originally written in a minority language, and that have been translated into Esperanto but not into the reader's mother tongue.



DISCOVER ESPERANTO

International Esperanto events

Here are some examples of popular international Esperanto events around the world:

HIMALAYAN MEETING



The Himalayan Meeting has a strong focus on tourism. With local Esperantists as their guides, the participants can learn about Nepalese life and the sights of Nepal. There's usually also a rather longer excursion outside the capital, Kathmandu, during which Esperanto speakers from Nepal and other countries can live together, get to know each other, and practise the language in an exotic environment.



INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONVENTION – IJK

An excellent event for all young Esperanto enthusiasts. In its lively informal atmosphere, it's easy to make new friends from other countries and get to know the global Esperanto youth movement. Hundreds of people take part, usually from about 30 countries. The convention is held in a different country each year.

YOUTH ESPERANTO WEEK – JES



A fun week of celebrations around New Year, somewhere in Europe. There's a serious programme during the day, but most people are there to hang out with friends, dance, and enjoy the nightlife.

NORTH AMERICAN SUMMER COURSES – NASK



NASK takes place over three weeks in the summer at a university in the USA, and consists of intensive Esperanto study at various levels of proficiency. Its teaching staff and body of students are international.

COMMON SEMINAR – KS



A cooperative seminar for young people, mostly from China, Japan, and Korea, held in each of those countries in turn. It takes place every year, and serves to bring together young Esperanto speakers in Asia.

CULTURAL ESPERANTO FESTIVAL – KEF

A festival with a colourful programme of Esperanto culture in which people of various ages take part. The musicians and artists come mainly – but not exclusively – from Europe. In



the afternoons and evenings there are usually plays, lectures, discussions, and concerts by Esperanto musicians. At night there's dancing, with a bar and a café. The festival is usually held in Northern Europe.

ALL-AMERICAN ESPERANTO CONVENTION – TAKE



TAKE's goals are to increase solidarity between the Esperantists of North, Central, and South America, to advance the Esperanto movement, and to study its problems. Along with its work sessions, the convention also has a number of educational and entertainment programmes that introduce participants to the history and culture of the host country.

WORLD CONVENTION – UK



The *Universala Kongreso* is the largest annual Esperanto event, and has a varied programme: mainly lectures and meetings, but also concerts, stage plays, excursions, and dancing. There are usually between 2000 and 4000 people from around 50 countries there. The event takes place in a different country each year.

How did Esperanto become a living language?

It may sound incredible that a one-man project could evolve into a living international language. Nonetheless, that's what has happened with Esperanto: it now develops in much the same way as other languages. (We know, because we use it every day.)

Here are the main factors that helped Esperanto become a living language:

◆ Zamenhof had a great talent for designing the heart of a language

Zamenhof started pondering the possibility of an international language when he was just a child – and when he became a young man, he decided to bring his ideas to fruition. At the age of 17, he showed the initial result to his school friends. Over the next ten years, he adjusted and refined the structure, and in 1887, he published it under the name *Lingvo Internacia*.



◆ People were soon using Esperanto in several countries

Within just a few years of its launch, Esperanto had a community of speakers who used it, appreciated it, and looked after it. Many of them exchanged letters and met up with Esperanto speakers from other countries. As a result, people were using Esperanto for various types of international communication right from the word go.



◆ Zamenhof left the development of Esperanto up to its users

In 1905, at the first major convention of Esperanto speakers, Zamenhof declared that he would no longer control the language's direction. Instead, anyone who used Esperanto could influence its evolution. That decision proved to be a wise one: it made many people feel they had a role to play in the process of developing the language, and so they became more involved.

◆ Esperanto has a stable core that forbids arbitrary changes

To avoid squabbles about alterations to Esperanto, Zamenhof suggested that the language should have a permanent unchanging core, as described in the document *Fundamento de Esperanto* (Foundation of Esperanto). This proposal was accepted in 1905, and the *Fundamento* continues to have a stabilizing effect on the language as it evolves today.

◆ Esperanto is partly natural and partly constructed

Because Esperanto uses word roots and grammatical concepts from national and ethnic languages, it feels like a natural language when you speak it. At the same time, Esperanto is relatively easy to learn – its grammar has no exceptions, and it derives new words in a sensible way.

These are features of its carefully constructed framework.



◆ The inner idea

– a commonly held (but optional) philosophy

Associated with Esperanto is a philosophy of peace and friendship between all the peoples of the world. This is often referred to as the 'inner idea'. It's a great inspiration to those who dream of a better, more peaceful future. It's because of the inner idea that many people are happy to devote their energy and spare time to the Esperanto movement.



◆ Esperanto is not just a European language

Esperanto uses European languages as the basis for its vocabulary, but its grammar and word-building system resemble Chinese, Turkish, and other non-Indo-European languages in several ways. Syntax and style in Esperanto are largely Slavic. People learn Esperanto in just a few months or a few years, regardless of their mother tongue, and they end up feeling fully at home in it.

The established community of Esperanto speakers all around the world today is proof that Esperanto has indeed become a living international language. Most speakers learn it when they're teens or adults, but there are also those people who grew up in an Esperanto family and so speak it as one of their native languages.

I have the abiding belief that Esperanto is the most valuable thing I inherited from my dear parents.

Carlo Minnaja from Italy, who spoke Esperanto at home with his parents and brother.



International Esperanto organizations

There are a number of international Esperanto organizations that make it easier for speakers to coordinate their activities at a global level. Here's a quick introduction to some of them.

Education@Internet – E@I

E@I is an international work group that promotes worldwide collaboration and communication. The group arranges educational projects and events to support cross-cultural studies alongside the use of languages and Internet techniques. An example of a successful E@I project is www.lernu.net (a multilingual website for learning Esperanto). Home page (multilingual): www.ikso.net



International League of Esperanto Teachers – ILEI

ILEI is the main gathering place for Esperanto teachers and educators. The organization has branches in over 30 countries and members in more than 45. ILEI's activities include teaching Esperanto in schools and universities, and arranging exams that test people's knowledge of Esperanto language and culture. Home page (in Esperanto): www.ilei.info



Esperantic Studies Foundation – ESF

ESF supports the research and teaching of Esperanto and related topics in the framework of interlinguistic communication, especially at university level in North America. It runs various projects that explore its central question: is it possible to have a world in which many languages, large and small, coexist in relative equality, and where communication on a global scale is accessible to rich and poor alike? Home page (in English): www.esperantic.org



World Esperanto Association – UEA

UEA was founded in 1908 as an organization for individual Esperanto speakers. At present, it's the largest international association of Esperantists, with members in 117 countries. UEA not only spreads the word about Esperanto, it also works to promote discussion of the world's language problems and to draw attention to the need for equality among languages. Home page (multilingual): www.uea.org



World Esperanto Youth Organization – TEJO

TEJO is an international non-governmental youth organization that was founded in 1938. Through Esperanto, it promotes peace and cross-cultural understanding among young people around the world. TEJO is actively engaged with the problems and concerns of young people today, especially regarding matters of language and culture. From its central office in the Netherlands, it coordinates the work of over 40 national branches and of members in more than 80 countries. Home page (multilingual): www.ikso.net. Home page (multilingual): www.tejo.org



European Esperanto Union – EEU

EEU fights for language equality and diversity in Europe. It regards equality as an essential part of true democracy, and considers language diversity to be as important as the diversity of animals and plants in ecology. Furthermore, EEU favours developing a European identity that would peacefully coexist with national and regional identities. Home page (in Esperanto): www.europeo.eu



International Association of Esperanto-speaking Cyclists – BEMI

This is one for people who like to ride their bike while speaking Esperanto! BEMI organizes various regular bicycle convoys, often in connection with youth events. Home page (multilingual): bemi.free.fr



Eurokka

Eurokka operates worldwide, both inside and outside the Esperanto movement, spreading and encouraging Esperanto's musical culture, and promoting bands and artists who perform in Esperanto. Home page (in Esperanto): artista.ikso.net/eurokka



World Non-National Association – SAT

SAT's main aim is education through Esperanto, particularly for the working class. For SAT, Esperanto is a tool, not a goal. The organization has a general socialist character, but it welcomes any socialist faction that accepts the principle of free and open debate. The word "non-national" means that, unlike the majority of the international workers' movement, SAT's members are not affiliated to regional or national branches. Home page (multilingual): www.satesperanto.org



Suitable for international communication



While you've been reading this booklet, you may have thought:

"Esperanto, an international language? But we already have an international language. English is the world's international language, and almost everyone can speak it."

You're quite right that English is the language most commonly used in international situations. Around 7% of people speak English as their mother tongue, and by various estimates, another 7% or so learn English to a high standard as teens or adults. But people who acquire great proficiency in English are generally those whose native languages resemble English, such as Germans, Dutch, and Swedes. For many others – Hungarians, Chinese, Turks, and Koreans, for example – whose mother tongues are very different from English, it's often extremely tricky and time-consuming to learn English to a high standard.

Lots of other languages are also used as bridges for communication in localized areas. There are many possible approaches to international communication. We believe that multilingualism deserves strong support, and the work of the Esperanto movement also supports the use of smaller or minority languages in various contexts. But bear in mind that not everyone is good at learning foreign languages, and that not everyone wants to spend their spare time learning several different ones. In particular, there are people who would like to learn to speak a foreign language, but were unable to achieve this at school: for them, Esperanto can be an interesting alternative.

In our experience, Esperanto is well suited for international communication. Here are some of the reasons why:

1) Easier

To anyone who has learned both Esperanto and a national or ethnic language as a foreign language, it's clear that Esperanto was the easier one to learn. Esperanto is a relatively easy language because there are only a few rules, and they don't have any exceptions. Furthermore, there's less vocabulary to memorize: you can easily build new words by combining roots, prefixes, and suffixes. We can't tell you exactly how much easier Esperanto is to learn than other languages: it varies, depending on which language you compare it with, and on the desired level of proficiency. But people generally learn Esperanto in a fifth to a third of the time they would need if they wanted to reach the same standard in other languages.



2) Less biased

Esperanto doesn't belong to any particular nation or people. This makes it less biased than national or ethnic languages when it comes to global communication. Esperanto is not tied to any specific nation or ethnic culture, and that's a great advantage for a language that serves as a bridge between the various peoples of the world. (This doesn't mean that Esperanto is a language with no culture: in fact it has an international culture all of its own.)

3) Fairer

There's a good chance that anyone who learns Esperanto will reach a high level of proficiency in it, and then be able to communicate on an equal linguistic footing with others, regardless of their language



background. This is the case for everyone, not just Westerners. It's generally true that speakers who learned Esperanto as a mother tongue don't speak the language any better than anyone else: anyone who studies Esperanto seriously can reach the same high standard as a native speaker. That's why, for global communication, Esperanto is fairer than the national languages – while a few people seem to master these effortlessly, most of us have to struggle for years to speak them well.

In my opinion, Chinese people learn Esperanto far more easily than European languages. In addition, Chinese who've learned Esperanto have a huge advantage over others when they study European languages.

Xiao Peiliang, China



Esperanto can be of great interest to anyone who feels it's important that an international language should be easy, neutral, and fair.

English is currently the most widely used language for global communication. But who knows? At some point in the future, more and more people may discover how well suited Esperanto is to the job of international communication, and then both English and Esperanto will serve in parallel as major international languages. That would mean a great deal to the millions of people who find it very hard to become proficient in English.



I'm an Iranian student, studying in Paris for a doctorate in science. I've always used English in my studies, and since arriving in France, I've begun learning French. I've learned Esperanto as well, and I must confess it's the only language – apart from my native one – in which I feel comfortable. I don't feel at home in any other foreign language. In my opinion, Esperanto is suitable for everyone,

including people from Asia.

Behrouz Soroushian, Iran

Esperanto culture

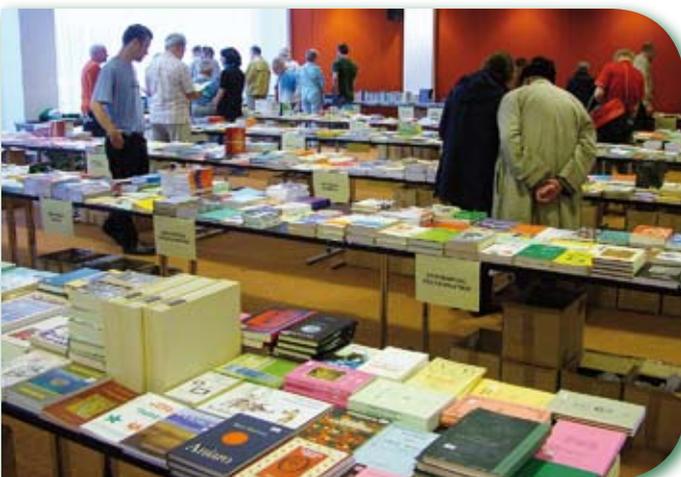
Esperanto has songs, films, poems, novels, short stories, magazines, plays, cabarets, folk music, rock music, pop music, rap music, and much more besides. So Esperanto definitely has culture. (The world "culture" can include a lot more than just these things, but this is a short booklet and we have to limit ourselves.)

There were poems even in the very first Esperanto booklet. Right from the start, people noticed that Esperanto had a richness and beauty that lent itself well to creative writing. After all, it's a language that feels liberating, partly because of its relatively free word order and its ability to create new words using prefixes and suffixes.

I discovered how amazing the language is for writing lyrics, and I wanted to continue for the sheer pleasure of writing in the language.



Martin Wiese,
*singer in the Esperanto bands
Persone and Martin & la talpoj*



Every year sees the publication of lots of new books in Esperanto.

Every year also sees the release of new Esperanto songs, and of CDs by artists in various genres. You can find Esperanto radio programmes and podcasts online. There are regular cultural festivals where people can enjoy various aspects of Esperanto culture. If you would like to listen to some Esperanto songs, go to www.vinilkosmo.com.



Singing in Esperanto is like singing in Portuguese, and it's more fun than singing in English.

Rogener Pavinski, from Brazil,
*singer with the rock group
Supernova*



Esperanto also serves as a bridge between national or ethnic cultures. One example of this is the thousands of books that have been translated into Esperanto from national or ethnic languages. They include the great classics, as well as more obscure "pearls of literature" written in minority language.



There are plenty of Esperanto magazines, with various subjects and audiences. Two of them are *Monato* and *Beletra Almanako*:

Monato (Month) is a monthly magazine about world events, major and minor. Its selling point is that its articles are not written by foreign correspondents (who seldom have really deep knowledge or understanding of local society) but by the very people who live in those countries and have directly experienced the events they describe.

Beletra Almanako (Literary Almanac) is a literary journal containing original and translated poetry and prose (fiction and non-fiction), essays, reviews, drama, and so on.



Take note!

The Esperanto community strongly supports the concepts of language diversity and language rights. All languages are valuable, and it's important that the majority languages do not push local and minority languages out of use.

Learning Esperanto is good preparation for learning other languages quickly and easily, whether you're a child or an adult. What's more, people who learn Esperanto often develop an interest in learning additional languages.

Esperanto is not perfect. It's not perfectly neutral, nor is it perfectly fair. But in our experience, it's a fairer and less biased way of communicating internationally than using a national language.

Esperanto is not a national language: its purpose or role is not the same. So to decide if it's a good language, we shouldn't ask how well it can duplicate what national languages do. Rather, we should judge it on how well it plays its own role – that of a bridge between ethnic groups.

From *La Bona Lingvo*
(The Good Language) by Claude Piron

Introducing the Esperanto language

This is a brief description of how Esperanto works. We don't have enough space here to describe the entire language, so we'll just look at the alphabet and the way words are formed. (For a detailed description of Esperanto grammar, as well as courses, exercises, and dictionaries, we recommend the multilingual website www.lernu.net.)

Alphabet and pronunciation

Esperanto has 28 letters, five of which are vowels:

a b c ĉ d e f g ĝ h ĥ i j k l m n o p r s ŝ t u ŭ v z

Helpfully enough, each letter has much the same sound regardless of the word it appears in, and the spelling of every word matches its pronunciation. This means that if you know how to pronounce a word, you also know how to spell it. All words are stressed on the second-to-last syllable, as in: *hUdo*, *internacIa*, *flOro*.

Words

Esperanto's vocabulary is drawn from several language families: about 75% of the roots are from Romance, about 20% are from Germanic, and about 5% come from other groups. Zamenhof tried to choose roots that are well-known to speakers of the main European languages. Here are some examples:

- ◆ **from Latin:** *sed* (but), *tamen* (however), *okulo* (eye), *akvo* (water)
- ◆ **from French:** *dimanĉo* (Sunday), *fermi* (to close), *ĉevalo* (horse), *butiko* (shop, store)
- ◆ **from Italian:** *ĉielo* (sky), *fari* (to do), *voĉo* (voice)
- ◆ **from various Romance language:** *facila* (easy), *fero* (iron), *tra* (through), *verda* (green)
- ◆ **from German:** *baldaŭ* (soon), *bedaŭri* (to regret), *jaro* (year), *nur* (only)
- ◆ **from English:** *birdo* (bird), *suno* (sun), *ŝarko* (shark), *teamo* (team)
- ◆ **from various Germanic languages:** *bildo* (picture), *fremda* (foreign), *halti* (to stop), *ofta* (frequent)

In Esperanto, a lot of words are more than just roots: they are compounds. For example, there's no root for the word "knife". Instead, the root *tranĉ-* (cut) is combined with the suffix *-il-* (denoting a tool) and the ending *-o* (indicating a noun) to produce *tranĉilo* "knife". Other examples with the *-il-* suffix are: *tondilo* (scissors), *ŝraŭbilo* (screwdriver), *skribilo* (writing implement), *retumilo* (web browser), *ludilo* (toy).



Word endings

An interesting aspect of Esperanto is that there are certain endings that apply equally well to any root.

For example, if we take the root *somer-* and add *-o* – the ending for nouns – we get *somero* (summer). But if we add *-a* – the adjective ending – then the word becomes *somera* (summery, relating to summer). And if we add the adverb ending *-e*, we get *somere* (in the summer, at summertime). The ending *-j* marks the plural: *someroj* (summers).

En Italio estas varmaj someroj. – In Italy, summers are hot.
Somere mi ŝatas bicikli. – In the summer I enjoy cycling.
Kia bela somera robo. – What a lovely summer dress.

-o for nouns: Nouns are names for people and things. A noun answers the question: "What is it?" Examples: *homo* (a person), *ideo* (an idea), *nomo* (a name), *domo* (a house).

-a for adjectives: Adjectives describe nouns. An adjective answers the question: "What's it like?" Examples: *bela* (beautiful), *bona* (good), *longa* (long), *varma* (hot), *interesa* (interesting).

-e for adverbs: Adverbs describe verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or entire sentences. Examples: *bele* (beautifully), *longe* (for a long time), *bone* (well), *interese* (interestingly). (There are also a few very basic adverbs that don't end in *-e*.)

-j for plurals: Plural means there's more than one. Examples: *homoj* (people), *ideoj* (ideas), *grandaj domoj* (large houses), *varmaj someroj* (hot summers).

-n for the object: The object of a sentence is the thing that's directly affected by the action. For example, in the sentence *Ŝi amas lin* (She loves him), *lin* (him) is the object.

-i, -is, -as, -os, -us, -u for verbs: The endings used with verbs are:

- ◆ **-i** for the infinitive, e.g. *vidi* (to see), *kanti* (to sing), *ridi* (to laugh)
- ◆ **-is** for the past tense, e.g. *vidis* (saw), *kantis* (sang), *ridis* (laughed)
- ◆ **-as** for the present tense, e.g. *vidas* (sees), *kantas* (sings), *ridas* (laughs)
- ◆ **-os** for the future tense, e.g. *vidos* (will see), *kantos* (will sing), *ridos* (will laugh)
- ◆ **-us** for the conditional, e.g. *vidus* (would see), *kantus* (would sing), *ridus* (would laugh)
- ◆ **-u** for commands, e.g. *vidu* (see!), *kantu* (sing!), *ridu* (laugh!)

These endings are the same for all verbs – which means there are no irregular verbs in Esperanto. What a relief!



words whose meanings are related. Esperanto's prefixes and suffixes (which the student has already memorized) make it an easy enough task to learn these words in Esperanto. But for the student of English, it's rather more difficult... Take a look:

Word building

Any given Esperanto root will generate various words if you combine it with different prefixes, suffixes, and endings. As a result, you don't have to learn as much vocabulary as in other languages: prefixes and suffixes make it easy to create the words you need on the fly.

One approach is to juggle the endings:

interes' =>

intereso – an interest

interesoj – interests

interesa – interesting

interese – interestingly

interesi – to interest someone

You can also create many new words from a single root by adding various prefixes (at the start) and suffixes (at the end). There are 10 prefixes and 32 suffixes in Esperanto. Here are some examples:

- ◆ **mal-** denotes an opposite: *bona* – *malbona* (good – bad), *juna* – *maljuna* (young – old), *fermi* – *malfermi* (to close – to open)
- ◆ **-ej-** denotes a place: *lerni* – *lernejo* (to learn – a school), *loĝi* – *loĝejo* (to reside – a home), *vendi* – *vendejo* (to sell – a shop)
- ◆ **-in-** denotes a female: *knabo* – *knabino* (boy – girl), *frato* – *fratino* (brother – sister), *viro* – *virino* (man – woman)
- ◆ **-ul-** denotes a person: *juna* – *junulo* (young – a young person), *grava* – *gravulo* (important – an important person), *stulta* – *stultulo* (stupid – a fool)

The system of affixes in Esperanto is one of Zamenhof's greatest inventions.

John Wells, professor of phonetics

In his book *Lingvistikaj aspektoj de Esperanto* (Linguistic Aspects of Esperanto), Professor Wells draws a thought-provoking comparison between Esperanto and English. He imagines two students – one studying English and the other studying Esperanto – who have to learn the word "eat", together with various other

In Esperanto In English

<i>manĝi</i>	to eat
<i>manĝas</i>	eats
<i>manĝis</i>	ate
<i>manĝos</i>	will eat
<i>manĝo</i>	a meal
<i>manĝaĵo</i>	food
<i>manĝado</i>	eating
<i>manĝejo</i>	dining room
<i>manĝujo</i>	trough
<i>manĝiloj</i>	cutlery
<i>manĝebla</i>	edible
<i>manĝinda</i>	good to eat
<i>manĝeti</i>	to nibble
<i>manĝegi</i>	to feast
<i>manĝaĉi</i>	to guzzle
<i>manĝema</i>	hungry
<i>manĝanto</i>	diner

The Esperanto student doesn't take long at all to master the words listed above, because they're just the root *manĝ-* combined with various prefixes and suffixes and endings that the learner already knows. But the student of English has to work really hard to memorize the different words with their correct spellings and pronunciations. We could give similar examples for almost all the basic vocabulary that people need when they try to communicate with each other internationally. Perhaps you now have a clearer picture of why Esperanto is so much easier than a language like English for foreigners to learn.

Some Esperanto phrases

Saluton! – Hello!

Bonan tagon! – Good morning!, Good afternoon!

Kiel vi nomiĝas? – What's your name?

Mia nomo estas ... – My name is ...

Kiel vi fartas? – How are you?

Mi fartas bone. – I'm fine.

Kie vi loĝas? – Where do you live?

Mi loĝas en ... – I live in ...

Mi ĝojas renkonti vin. – I'm delighted to meet you.

Ankaŭ mi! – Same here!

Bonege! – Excellent!

If you'd like to listen to some spoken Esperanto, we recommend the website *Radio Verda* (www.radioverda.com) or the Esperanto broadcasts of *Polish Radio* (www.polskieradio.pl/eo).



Stano Marček's richly illustrated textbook *Esperanto by direct method* has been published in many languages. Find out about it at www.ikso.net/stano.marcek

Personal stories about Esperanto

Here are some personal stories from people who regularly use Esperanto.

I FEEL PART OF A WORLDWIDE COMMUNITY



Name: Erin Piatieski
Country: United States
Profession:
Mechanical engineer
Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Member of the lernu.net team

I started learning Esperanto in high school, because I'd heard that Esperanto was an easy language, and so I thought Esperanto might be my only chance to speak a foreign language fluently. I found that friends and members of my family who had taken courses in a language could hardly ever speak that language, even at a basic level. So I studied Esperanto, hoping it would be my introduction to the world of foreign languages. At the time, I never imagined what I would later be able to do with the language: I just wanted to learn a foreign language, to be able to say that I speak more than one language.

Despite this simple plan, Esperanto has become an important part of my life. I now have a boyfriend from abroad and I speak only Esperanto with him. In that sense, speaking Esperanto has become part of my daily activity – I don't just use it to talk with people in other countries, I also use it to discuss the weather, to debate recent politics, and to ask if there are enough eggs in the fridge to cook pancakes. But Esperanto has given me more than just a relationship: it has changed the way I see the world. It's often said that you can talk to people from every country in the world using English, and that's true. But not many people know that it's equally true for Esperanto. I've found that there are big differences between using English and Esperanto for international communication. I feel that using Esperanto puts people on a level footing, not only as far as language is concerned, but also from a social point of view.

Through Esperanto, I feel that I have "friends I don't know" almost everywhere in the world. When I travel, either for work or on vacation, I can almost always find a local Esperantist to meet. In a country I've never visited before, this means that after just one evening, I no longer feel like a foreigner in the new country. Using a *common language*, I can easily talk to other people: I don't need to worry about reading the menu at a restaurant or being sure I understand the local customs, because the local Esperantists help me with that. As a result, I feel part of a worldwide community: not as an American, but as an Esperantist.

ESPERANTO HAS BEEN MY JOB FOR 7 YEARS

Name: Katalin Kováts
Country: Netherlands / Hungary
Profession: Teacher and website editor
Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Founder and editor of www.edukado.net
- ◆ Highly regarded teacher and educationalist



When I was expecting my first child, I spent long months lying in hospital, but in the last few weeks I suddenly thought of Esperanto, which I'd heard about several times in my life, and I asked my husband to get me a textbook and a dictionary. The book was called "30 nap alatt eszperantoul" (Esperanto in 30 days), and I studied it intensively before my first son was born. In my incapacitated state, I really enjoyed mastering a language to a level where I could communicate successfully in just a few weeks!

I continued learning after the birth, and soon started teaching Esperanto myself, in the school where I taught maths and Russian. Later on, I sought contact with other Esperantists. That wasn't a difficult task in Hungary, where there were (and still are) plenty of trained Esperanto teachers. I became one too, and the "green language" (i.e. Esperanto) began to weave itself deep into my life – mine and that of my whole family. It gave us the opportunity to travel. I gave a crash course at an Esperanto centre in Switzerland, I taught in France, and then I held courses in dozens of European countries, one after the other. I occasionally got the chance to teach in the USA, Australia, and Africa. My children – unlike their classmates – made friends in many countries, and this significantly broadened their picture of the world and opened their minds to different cultures and languages.



MY MAIN INTEREST IN ESPERANTO LIES WITH ITS CULTURE

Name: Rogener Pavinski

Country: Brazil

Profession: Filmmaker and musician

Esperanto activities include:

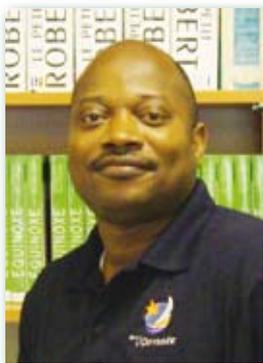
- ◆ Musician in the rock group Supernova
- ◆ Creator of the film "Esperanto estas..."
- ◆ TEJO board member



In 2005 I took part in a competition run by TEJO (World Esperanto Youth Organization) and got financial help to travel to the International Youth Convention in Poland. I seized the opportunity and spent a month at four Esperanto events in four different countries. That was an unforgettable adventure for me, because I'd never travelled abroad before!

My main interest in Esperanto lies with its culture, and as I'd always wanted to create music in Esperanto, I started working on songs with some friends. The result was the creation of a rock group and an album called Supernova, released in 2006 by French record label Vinilkosmo. I also have professional links with Esperanto. One of the most important projects I've undertaken so far has involved collaborating internationally on the documentary *Esperanto estas...* (Esperanto is...), which I edited. I've also produced a music video for Supernova, and I continue to produce various other short films.

ESPERANTO MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A TRUE WORLD CITIZEN



Name: Jean Codjo

Country: Canada / Benin

Profession: Teacher

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Member of the African Commission
- ◆ Editor of the bulletin *Esperanto in Africa*

I learned Esperanto quite by chance during a political crisis in Benin (1988). At the time, I meant to learn Spanish, but I mistook Esperanto for it. I began to have doubts when I noticed the language was too easy to be Spanish. It was only then that I discovered it was actually an international language. I started by spending a few weeks studying Esperanto on my own; I then corresponded with an Esperantist in the Netherlands to learn more.

For me, Esperanto became another language that I could use to communicate with new friends in different countries, not just with Spanish people. That's how I made friends with people from all over the globe, even those whose native languages I knew absolutely nothing about. In addition, Esperanto has had an effect on my private and professional life – the way I act, the way I think, and the way I relate to other people, regardless of their ethnicity or culture.

Thanks to Esperanto, I went on to learn German. My very first pen pal was a German girl. Although we wrote to each other in Esperanto, I wanted to know more and more about her language. I also knew that some aspects of Esperanto grammar, especially the -n ending for objects, were similar to German. And the system of making new words by combining existing ones is similar to how German words are constructed. In the end, I decided to study German to degree level at university. Today I'm a professional language teacher, and German is one of the languages I teach. I've become more tolerant and open to other cultures. Esperanto makes me feel like a true world citizen.

THANKS TO ESPERANTO I'VE ENJOYED MANY CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS ABROAD



Name: Satoo Reiko

Country: Japan

After the end of the Second World War, my older brother learned the Latin alphabet. While my mother was supervising his studies, she told me and him about Esperanto, which she'd learned when she was young. For some reason her words impressed me greatly and stayed in my heart for a long time. Some 42 years later, I read an article about Esperanto in a newspaper. This really interested me because I missed my mother, and it inspired me to join a course that was taking place in the town hall at the time. I plucked up the courage to go to the classroom, and I began studying Esperanto every Wednesday from May to October, except in August. As soon as the course ended, I started corresponding with a Bulgarian woman, and hugely enjoyed it. Not long afterwards, I received an unexpected letter from a Czech woman who wanted to correspond. In 1995, when I travelled to Eastern Europe with my husband, I met her and her husband in Prague. I don't have the words to express how moving this was for me. Thanks to Esperanto and its speakers, I've enjoyed many close friendships and pleasant trips abroad.

LEARNING ESPERANTO LED ME TO LIVE ON A DIFFERENT CONTINENT

Name: Russ Williams

Country: Poland / USA

Professions: Translator and teacher

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Collaborator in lernu.net and other projects
- ◆ Various translation projects



In April of 2003, on the spur of the moment and along with some colleagues, I decided to learn a constructed language, just for fun. After spending a couple of interesting days with Lojban, two of us thought: "Lojban seems like a very difficult language, and there are probably very few people who actually speak it. Maybe we should look at Esperanto. It's presumably easier and has more speakers." A quick search with Google confirmed this, and inspired me to read about Esperanto's fascinating history, culture, and literature. I realized I was finding Esperanto intriguing as more than just a language with an elegant grammar that was fun to play with. Political events in 2003 were making me think about peace, tolerance, better mutual understanding, international relations, etc. I had the gut feeling that learning Esperanto would be an important decision in my life, but I never imagined it would lead me to live on a different continent.

To cut a long story short, between 2003 and 2005 I took part in various Esperanto events around the world, got to know a very charming Polish woman, and moved to Wrocław in Poland: Anna and I are now engaged and live together, using Esperanto as our main language at home. I'm learning Polish, which is much more difficult than Esperanto, but my knowledge of Esperanto as a second language helps me learn other languages and gives me confidence in doing so. I'm really happy that my colleagues and I had that jokey conversation about constructed languages back in 2003!

ESPERANTO HAS GIVEN ME FRIENDS ALL OVER THE WORLD



Name: Li Jianhua

Country: China

Profession: Journalist

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Working for the magazine *El popola Ĉinio* (From People's China)

I started learning Esperanto at the Communication University of China in the autumn of 2003. A year later, I worked as a volunteer and guide at the 89th World Convention in Beijing. After graduating from university, I joined the staff of *El Popola Ĉinio* in July 2005. My work often put me in touch with Esperanto speakers abroad, and those contacts have given me friends all over the world. One of my friends is Povilas Jegorovas from Lithuania, and he invited me to give a talk at the World Conference of Esperanto Journalists in Lithuania's capital, Vilnius. I was delighted: this meant I could experience my first trip abroad and make my first speech in that sort of conference. I was able to take part in the conference thanks to a grant from *El Popola Ĉinio*. There were two "firsts" for me there: it was the first time I'd spoken with foreign dignitaries (the president of the Lithuanian parliament and the mayor of Vilnius were at the banquet, and I talked to them with the help of Mr Jegorovas), and it was the first time I'd attended the making of a TV programme. I gained a lot of friends at the conference, and a deep sense of friendship. I will never forget that.

I WAS CAPTIVATED BY ESPERANTO'S INTERNAL LOGIC

Name: Zsófia Kóródy

Country: Germany / Hungary

Profession: Certified Esperanto teacher

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Board member of the International League of Esperanto Teachers
- ◆ Director of the Association of German Esperanto Teachers



I studied linguistics at university in Budapest, and started learning Esperanto simply because I wanted to see how a constructed language works and what it consists of. I was captivated by Esperanto's structure and internal logic. But I wasn't satisfied with merely analysing the language, so I went looking for speakers, to put the language to some use. A new world opened up. I got to know many people – many friends throughout the world – and with their help I explored foreign countries, cities, cultures, and customs. Later I decided to become an Esperanto teacher, dedicating my life to working to help more and more people discover this wonderful method of interpersonal communication.

I've been teaching several languages, including Esperanto, for over 30 years, in schools and various other courses. It's very interesting to compare the progress of my students, and see how much faster they start to use Esperanto. After just a short time they can hold conversations in the language and make friends in other countries easily.

Since 2003 I've been living and working in the German city of Herzberg am Harz, where my teaching has also contributed to Esperanto becoming an optional part of the school curriculum.

Furthermore, Esperanto has been chosen as the language in which Herzberg communicates with its twin (sister) cities. Because Esperanto can be found in so many aspects of the city's life, in 2006 the council added a nickname: "Herzberg am Harz – the Esperanto city".

ESPERANTO IS PART OF MY NORMAL LIFE

Name: Renato Corsetti

Country: Italy

Profession: Professor of psycholinguistics, retired

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Former president of TEJO and UEA
- ◆ Member of the Academy of Esperanto



I learned Esperanto when I was fairly young, about twenty years old, because I was interested in languages. At that time, I would study Swahili or Urdu simply for the pleasure of learning other languages. I taught myself Esperanto from a textbook I found somewhere. I studied the other languages superficially, just enough to see how they worked. But I didn't remain an Esperantist because of the language and its amazing features. I remained an Esperantist because of Esperanto's political meaning. All persons and peoples are equal, all cultures have something of value in them, and if you are looking for a truly international language, it's Esperanto.

I later added other elements to my Esperanto life, because I married an English Esperantist, and we always speak Esperanto at home. We have two sons, now grown up, who speak Esperanto as well as Italian and English. So Esperanto is part of my normal life, when we go shopping at the local supermarket or when we're cooking or having fun. I just want to emphasize that my wife and I always speak Esperanto together, even after thirty years of her learning Italian perfectly and me constantly using English for various purposes. We speak Esperanto together simply because it's what feels most natural and best for us.

ESPERANTO HAS REALLY BOOSTED MY INTEREST IN OTHER COUNTRIES AND CULTURES

Name: Marcos Cramer

Country: Germany

Profession: Doctoral student in logic

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Editor of a magazine about the Esperanto youth movement
- ◆ Contributor to the Esperanto Wikipedia



I began learning Esperanto at the age of sixteen because I was interested in the grammar of a simple constructed language. As soon as I'd started, I became interested in Esperanto's ideals – internationality and equality – which were important factors for me in continuing to study. At first I learned Esperanto from a short textbook, then I used it on the Internet, and after just nine months, I took part in my first event: a week-long international Esperanto youth meeting where I was able to speak the language well.

I now use Esperanto almost every day on the Internet, where I'm in contact with people on several continents. I also often take part in international youth meetings that use Esperanto, and from time to time I use the hospitality service of *Pasporta Servo* for low-cost trips and for closer contact with the local population. Esperanto has really boosted my interest in other countries and cultures, as well as my interest in other languages. It was through Esperanto that I met my half-Russian wife, as well as many good friends from different countries.

ESPERANTO HAS SHOWN ME A NEW WAY TO LOOK AT THE WORLD

Name: Trinh Hong Hanh

Country: Vietnam

Profession: Commercial office worker

Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Board member of Vietnamese Esperanto Youth Organization



One day, at my best friend's house, I met her neighbour – and she was the first person to tell me about Esperanto. Straight away, lots of questions popped into my head: "What's the Esperanto language like?", "Whose language is it?", "Is it like English?", "Is it really easy to learn?", and so on. To discover the answers to these questions for myself, I decided to learn Esperanto at the beginners' Esperanto course in Hanoi. The course was given by a competent instructor. Apart from teaching me the language, he also described Esperanto's "inner idea" and gave me the benefit of his rich practical experience of organizing events for the movement. It was he who encouraged us to volunteer to help at the second Asian Esperanto Convention in August 1999, in Hanoi. What a surprise! In just six months of three lessons a week, we learned the language and did everything we could to make the second Asian Esperanto Convention a success. And it was so awesome! Our entire class of beginners became the core of the Vietnamese Esperanto youth movement. Many of my classmates did more than just contribute: they took on the important responsibility of setting up new Esperanto organizations. Esperanto has shown me a new way to look at the world and brought me new understanding. My love for Esperanto and the movement has never stopped growing. I'm really pleased with my progress, and even more so with the progress of our Esperanto youth movement in Vietnam.



YOU CAN EVEN FIND ESPERANTO IN VILLAGES WITH NO ELECTRICITY

Name: Vladka Chvátalová
Country: Czech Republic / Belgium
Profession: Translator
Esperanto activities include:

- ◆ Former general secretary of TEJO

I began learning Esperanto as a 13-year-old girl, using a textbook that I found at my grandmother's. At the time, Czechoslovakia was quite a closed country – you couldn't just go abroad – but I wanted to at least correspond with foreigners, preferably from exotic countries, of course. I completed an Esperanto correspondence course, then discovered there was an organized movement devoted to the language, and I quickly became a member of the Czech Esperanto Youth. That was how I started my "journey through Esperantoland". Over the years, I've met people with all kinds of cultures, ideologies, and opinions – a great example of the university of life!

When the ILEI conference was held in Benin (Africa) in 2008, it opened a whole new world for me, one that I'm now trying to getting a better understanding of. I'd like to get involved with new projects to help at least some of the people there who need help so badly. It's incredible how many brilliant, enthusiastic Esperanto speakers you can find in villages with no electricity, such as Klévé in southern Togo!

We Esperanto speakers are a relatively well-organized network of people, and we can use this to change the lives of others, in part by supporting children's education and health in poor countries. This is what I've been trying to do since 2008, in collaboration with an orphanage in the city of Lokossa in Benin, where there are also a lot of Esperantists. There's no better reward than the smile of a child who has received speedy medical treatment or a school education thanks to our help.

ESPERANTO MAKES INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS MUCH EASIER

Name: Kong Kil-yeon
Country: South Korea



It was purely by chance that I came into contact with Esperanto. One winter, I was watching a TV programme in which an old man was attending a course, learning Esperanto. The words "Esperanto, international language" interested me, but I quickly forgot all about them. On my first day at university, I came across the word Esperanto again, on a poster that members of the university's Esperanto club had put up to attract new students. So I took part in their course. Once I'd mastered the grammar, I began to correspond with foreign Esperantists. To improve my abilities in Esperanto, I asked a

Japanese Esperantist to correct the mistakes in my letters. She helped me reach a high standard in the language, and she also helped me understand Esperanto's "inner idea". I've now been able to make friends with hundreds of Esperantists around the world, just by using Esperanto. By corresponding and talking with these people, I've discovered what the purpose of Esperanto is. International contacts and relationships are really interesting and Esperanto makes them much easier.

FOR ME ESPERANTO IS A GREAT INSPIRATION

Name: Hokan Lundberg
Country: Sweden
Profession: High school teacher
Esperanto activities include:



- ◆ One of the founders of E@I and lernu.net
- ◆ Coordinator of this booklet

I had a problem with learning foreign languages at school. I struggled with English and German for many years, but sadly I never got to a good standard. When I was 20, I suddenly felt like learning Esperanto after reading the Danish author Martinus. I had to struggle for several years with Esperanto too, but the difference was that this was a language I felt I could eventually get the hang of, and I gradually reached a high level. You could say I'm proof that someone who has no talent for learning foreign languages can learn Esperanto well. My experiences inspired me to work for the language in various ways.

For several years I was fully occupied with Esperanto projects, but now I only work on them in my spare time. My wife Sonja is also very fond of Esperanto. We met during a TEJO seminar by the Black Sea in Bulgaria, and since then we've been using Esperanto together. Sonja comes from Serbia and I'm from Sweden, so Esperanto serves as a language bridge between our different backgrounds. She speaks Serbian with our children and I speak Esperanto. They use Swedish at nursery school and in the neighbourhood. This works very well. It's incredible to see how quickly children can switch between different languages depending on who they're talking to.

We decided that I should use Esperanto with our children for two main reasons: 1) To stop their Swedish from becoming too dominant over their Serbian, so that they don't just understand Serbian, but can also use it themselves when we visit grandparents and friends in Serbia. 2) Because my wife and I want to continue using Esperanto together, to keep it as one of our family languages. Another reason is that I really enjoy speaking Esperanto, especially with my loved ones.

You may have noticed from these stories that various people have found their life partners through Esperanto. Isn't that a sure sign that Esperanto can express feelings and love?

Zamenhof, Esperanto's founder

As a child, Zamenhof dreamed of ways to bring mankind together in peace. Establishing an international language was one of them, and he never gave up on that dream. In this section, you'll see how he got his idea for a new international language, and how he turned it into reality.

A boy with a great dream

In 1859, a Jewish boy named Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof was born. He grew up in the small city of Białystok with its mixed population of Poles, Russians, Jews, Germans, and a number of Lithuanians, each group speaking its own language. Zamenhof was quick to note that these ethnic groups did not always get on well with each other, and that their misunderstandings and quarrels often arose from the lack of a common language. These experiences had a big influence on young Ludoviko (to use the Esperanto form of his name), and when he was still a child, he had a great vision of a *common language* (alongside the ethnic languages) that all the groups could share. With such a language, places like Białystok would be more peaceful, and people could talk directly to each other to at least try and solve any conflicts before they escalated into serious arguments.



If I hadn't been a Jew from the ghetto, the idea of unifying mankind would either never have entered my head, or at least not dogged me so persistently throughout my entire life.

From a letter Zamenhof wrote in 1905

How about one of the classical languages?

Zamenhof was convinced it would never work if the language of one of the ethnic groups was chosen as the common one, because that could provoke jealousy among the other groups, and give a considerable advantage to the group who used that language natively. At high school, Zamenhof started learning Latin and Greek – the classical languages – and he wondered whether one of those could be used as an international common language. But after studying them for a while, he decided they were too hard to learn, even for him with his knowledge of several other languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, German, and French. So how hard would they be for people who didn't have any great interest or experience of learning languages? No, the common international language would have to be easier than the classical languages, but just as politically neutral as them. But did such a language exist?

An "artificial" language

A language that's neutral but also easy to learn. Is that even possible? Learning a language is never an easy task, and is there anything in the world that can be said to be completely neutral? Probably not, but that doesn't rule out the possibility of a language

that's less difficult and biased than the ethnic languages. Zamenhof thought a lot about this, and came to the conclusion that an artificial language was the best solution. By "artificial", he meant that the structure of the language should be designed by one or more people. While he was still in high school, Zamenhof started experimenting with ways of creating a new language, but he often doubted whether he could make a good job of it. Despite all his doubts, he stayed true to his dream of a common international language, and he continued experimenting with his "artificial" language, gradually making some progress.

Simple grammar, but what about the vocabulary?

When he learned English at the end of high school, Zamenhof was inspired by how easy its grammar was in comparison to Latin and Greek, and he realized it was possible to have a language with a grammar that was clear and straightforward. He started to simplify the grammar of the language he was building, and after some careful work, he was reasonably happy with it – but the vocabulary just kept on growing! How could he solve this new problem? A language has to have words for just about everything. He came up with the answer when he saw two Russian signs. The words on the signs were "Shveytsarskaya" (porter's lodge) and "Konditerskaya" (sweet shop, candy store). Both words ended in "-skaya", and Zamenhof suddenly grasped how important suffixes could be. "I've solved the problem!" he decided, as he stood looking at the two Russian signs. Later, he started to make detailed comparisons of words, looking for connections between them, to decide which prefixes and suffixes would be useful in his language. This work proved crucial: Zamenhof managed to dramatically reduce the number of word roots that people would need to memorize.

The first draft

At first, Zamenhof tried building words from short groups of letters: a, ab, ac, ad, ... ba, ca, da, ... e, eb, ec, ... be, ce, ... aba, aca, ... But he quickly rejected this idea, because it turned out to be impossible to remember the made-up words. Then he became convinced that the vocabulary should use roots from the Romance and Germanic languages as its basis. That way, his new language would have a natural similarity to European languages. At the end of high school, Zamenhof was able to show his school friends the essentials of a language that he called "Lingwe Uniwersala". Several of his friends were inspired to learn it. In December 1878, they gathered together to celebrate the completion of the first draft of his language. They even sang a hymn in it.

Testing it and improving it

Zamenhof didn't want to present his language to the public straight away, partly because he was too young to do so, but mainly because he wanted time to test the language carefully and make various improvements. Some of the high school students who had learned "Lingwe Uniwersala" tried to discuss it with adults, but they soon gave up when they found that most people simply laughed at them. Zamenhof decided to continue working on his language project in secret, to avoid such mockery and worse – because Jews at that time were being persecuted for anything and everything. As he tried the language out, making translations of lengthy texts, he noticed certain aspects of the language that needed adjusting (even though they'd seemed fine in theory), and he made constant improvements to the language. He gradually realized he'd be better off avoiding literal translations, and he started thinking directly in the new language instead. At this point, Zamenhof decided that his language had acquired a *spirit* of its own: it had begun to come *alive*. That's how the core of modern-day Esperanto was born.

Lingvo internacia



While he was practising medicine in Warsaw, Zamenhof started looking for a publisher to print a booklet about his new language. He prepared a manuscript entitled "Lingvo Internacia" (International Language), but instead of putting his real name on the book, he used the pseudonym "Dr Esperanto". The word "Esperanto" means someone who hopes, and so this was an apt description for the eye

specialist from Białystok – a doctor with hopes for a better world and for unity and peace between its peoples. But he couldn't publish the booklet at first. He had trouble finding a printer who would produce it – and he needed funding, too.

Zamenhof was lucky in more ways than one because he'd just got engaged to Klara Silbernik, who supported his idea of a neutral language. In the summer of 1887, they received financial help from Klara's father, and they used a large part of the money to publish the so-called "Unua Libro" (First Book). This booklet, which was initially printed in Russian and later translated into other languages, included a preface with some poems in Esperanto, a description of the grammar, and a small dictionary. The booklet gradually circulated among idealists and language enthusiasts, initially in Europe, and then in other parts of the world as well.

The next few years were hectic for the newlywed Zamenhofs, involving small children, work, and Esperanto correspondence by night. They weren't rich, but they managed to live in reasonable comfort, and in 1905 they had enough money to



travel to France and take part in the first Esperanto convention, in the city of Boulogne-sur-Mer. There was a wonderful atmosphere among the participants, about 700 in all, from 20 countries. In his opening address, Zamenhof gave an emotional speech about his work and his belief in the unity of mankind. Here's a brief extract:

We should be fully mindful of the great importance of this day, for today we have come together, within the welcoming walls of Boulogne-sur-Mer, not as French with English, nor as Russians with Poles, but as people with people.

A naive dreamer?

Some of Zamenhof's dreams and ideas were naive. For instance, he tried to construct a neutral religious framework that would bring together all believers and freethinkers and make peace between them – but that project never got off the ground, even among Esperanto speakers. While it may be true that Esperanto hasn't taken the world by storm either, it does nonetheless have hundreds of thousands of speakers – perhaps even millions – who admire the language and use it in a wide range of situations. No other language project has blossomed into a language that's actually alive and spoken by people all around the world, in everyday use for global communication and in "international families" (with parents from different countries and language backgrounds). When you look at it from that angle, Zamenhof's language is a resounding success, and as Esperanto speakers we have great respect for him and his creativity. His work has brought us pleasure, inspiration, and friendly ties with people from all over the world.



The psychology of Esperanto

You can approach the world's language problem by various routes, including politics, linguistics, finance, economics, and so on. Here it's tackled from a psychological angle by psychologist Claude Piron, who also worked as a UN translator for many years.

Esperantists often complain that the world doesn't understand them, that it isn't interested in their point of view, or that Esperanto isn't making fast enough progress. The idea that the language isn't making enough progress is widespread among Esperanto speakers, and it stems from one of the most important features of the human psyche: desire. People want to see Esperanto making progress, and they react to this desire like small children. They don't want to see the size of the hurdles and obstacles that stand in the way of fulfilling their desire.

So they feel frustrated. When they feel frustrated, they don't face up to the fact that they were being unrealistic all along, and that the mistake therefore lay with them. Instead, they look for someone else to blame – they blame the rest of the world, which failed to pay them any attention. It's childish, but I'm not being critical when I say that: I'm merely describing part of the normal behaviour of the human psyche. When we have a strong desire, we tend to react childishly.

Language is a very complicated phenomenon

I touched on another psychological aspect of the situation when I said that the world doesn't understand Esperantists. Why doesn't the world understand Esperantists? Because society doesn't really understand the general language situation. Why? There are many reasons. One is that language is a very complicated phenomenon, and complicated things are hard to understand. When something is very complicated, the natural approach is to simplify it. As a result, society in general has a very simplistic picture of the world's language situation. It's more of a sketch than a picture.

There's another psychological reason why society doesn't really understand the language problem, and that's fear. This may surprise you. Indeed, if you go up to a politician, or a linguist, or even a random person in the street, and tell them that fear is one of the reasons the world hasn't solved the language problem, they'll look at you as if you're crazy. For one thing, for them, the language problem simply doesn't exist. "It's already been solved by English, or translators." Furthermore, even if the problem does exist, it has nothing to do with fear. "Nobody's afraid of language," they'll say. "You're talking nonsense." However, many fears are unconscious. We're not aware of them, and that's a good thing, because we wouldn't be able to lead happy lives if we were. But the fact remains that these fears cause many errors and distortions in our understanding of reality.

Why does language evoke fear? Again, there are many reasons. Language is linked to our identity, for instance. At some point



Claude Piron

in our childhood, we realize that the people around us are speaking *this* language as opposed to *that* one, and this defines us in relation to the rest of the world. I belong to a group of people defined by the language it speaks. Deep in my mind, then, my language is me. The extensive use of the Swiss dialects of German is a way of saying: "This is who we are – we're not Germans." Or look at how Flemish and Catalan people react: "Anyone who persecutes my language or criticizes it, is persecuting or criticizing me."

Many people have a disparaging attitude to Esperanto because it strikes them as a language that doesn't define a group of people, a language that lacks human identity, and therefore either not a language at all, or at best a language that's artificial rather than natural – one whose similarity to real languages is like that of a robot to a person. And this scares them. They're afraid that this robot, which is said to have worldwide ambitions, will trample all other languages, all ethnic groups, everything that's alive and individual, crushing them out of existence. This may sound like a flight of fancy. But it's the truth.

There's a psychological technique known as "clinical conversation". It explores how ideas and images are associated with one another, by asking people to say what passes through their minds in response to a certain word. With the word "Esperanto", the technique reveals the presence of this unconscious fear in the minds of a large number of people.

Taboo

In fact, the whole area of language-based communication between nations and ethnic groups is subject to a taboo. If you study the documents that get produced in that field, you'll find that about 99% of them present the facts as if Esperanto didn't exist – as if nobody had ever had any experience of any sort of international communication other than through the usual methods of translation, interpretation, or using a prestigious national language like English. Esperanto is taboo. What proves it's a taboo is the refusal to compare.

When scientists want to know the value of something, they always compare it with a reference point. Before deciding on a new medicine, you see how effective it is in comparison with more familiar substances. And when a firm launches some sort of major project, such as building a new stadium, what's the first step? They issue a request for bids. Various companies are asked to submit proposals, and the project's organizers compare the bids and accept the one that's best in terms of cost and all the other relevant criteria. That's the normal procedure.

As it happens, there's a whole branch of science devoted to the art of choosing the best way to achieve a specific goal. It's known

as "operations research" or "quantitative management". If you apply the rules of operations research to the language problem, you find that, out of all the methods that are currently in practical use, Esperanto is the optimal way to achieve the goal.

But to establish this fact, you have to do a comparison between the various methods. You need an objective practical view (from on the ground, as it were) of how Esperanto compares with sign language, or with broken use of a poorly spoken language, or with use of English, or with use of Latin, or with translation of documents and with simultaneous or consecutive interpretation of speech. Such comparisons are the only way to decide what the best system is.

Thousands and thousands of pages have been written about the language situation, sometimes in the UN, sometimes in the EU, and sometimes in university linguistics departments. Even so, very few documents base their discussion of the issues on a comparison that includes Esperanto – you can count them on the fingers of your hands. Comparing all the possible solutions to a problem is such a common activity in other fields; its absence in the field of international language-based communication shows that there's a taboo at work.

Where does the taboo come from?

Why are language issues subject to a taboo? Once again, there are many reasons. Some of them are political. A number of governments disapprove of the idea of "ordinary people" communicating with one another, free from barriers. Some of the reasons are social. That same idea can be unsettling for the privileged social classes, too. People who have mastered English (or another important language) have many advantages over those who only speak local languages – and many of them don't want to lose their advantages. This is particularly true in the Third World.

But I think the main causes of the taboo are psychological. The heart of the matter is the emotional charge in the concept of "language": its weightiness, the mood it evokes, and the fact that it strikes such a deep chord in our souls. We think in concepts and words. And these words and concepts aren't just intellectual – they tug at our emotions, they elicit certain feelings: not all words, but many of them. If I say "war" or "money" or "mother" or "sex" or "nuclear power", something stirs deep inside you, although you're generally unaware of it. In other words, we're not indifferent in the face of many of our concepts, especially those that are somehow connected to our desires, our needs, our aspirations, our pleasure, our suffering, our influence, etc.

Language is one of those concepts that tends to provoke strong emotional reactions. Why? Because language implies the ability to make yourself understood, and this ability is one of the most basic desires of every human being. If I'm plagued by worries or upset in some other way, then I feel I've been helped if I can talk about it to someone who listens to what I say and reacts with understanding. By sharing my worries or problems with someone else, I no longer feel alone, and I'm better able to cope.

When a baby is upset and crying – often because it doesn't understand what's happening – the adults present sometimes don't react correctly. In fact their only reaction may be to pull a helpless face. But when the child has acquired a language, and can say "My ear hurts", the reactions of the adults are quite

different. True communication takes place, and this changes the child's life. Since communication occurs most often and most effectively with the mother, the child's emotions towards the idea of "language" include its feelings towards her. That's why most languages talk of a "mother tongue", even though it's really a "parent tongue" or "location tongue".

Look how emotional people become when they react to the idea of changing the spelling of their language. Observe the arguments closely, and you'll see there's nothing truly rational about them. It's all to do with emotions – the emotions aroused by the word "language".

Both "father" and "mother"

Esperanto sounds like Frankenstein's monster when people say it was put together by one man. It sounds like it had a "father" but no "mother": the hideous offspring of a twisted loner. This image has been bolstered by definitions of Esperanto in many dictionaries, encyclopedias, language books, and even Esperanto's own publicity materials, which state that "Esperanto was created by Zamenhof in 1887". In fact, Esperanto wasn't created in 1887. What was published in 1887 was the seed of a language that had already spent many years growing and maturing in Zamenhof's head and in his notebooks.

That process took a long time, and it was like the gradual development of a seed within a plant; the project's publication was like the sowing of the seed. But seeds only come *alive* if they're planted in fertile soil. And that soil was Esperanto's "mother": the community of idealists who first accepted the seed and gave it an environment where it could grow and evolve and flourish into something that was viable enough to survive on its own, independent of any one person.

Esperanto's present form isn't the work of Zamenhof; rather, it's a language that took Zamenhof's project as a basis, and was then evolved over a century of constant use by a wide variety of people. It's a language that has developed quite naturally as a result of everyday usage, literature, and competing innovations, usually unconscious ones. It's certainly not a monstrosity cobbled together by a single person. OK, so it has a "father" – a wonderful father, and one who managed to imbue it with the amazing potential for life that it needed. But it also had a "mother" who lovingly nursed it, and who breathed far more life into it than its "father" alone could have done..

In the long run

As you can see, the psychological aspects of Esperanto – and of the world's language problems – are far more complex than you might initially suspect. Most people's psychological makeup offers strong resistance to the mere idea of an international language that isn't also a national language. That resistance means there's almost no one in the political, social, and intellectual elite who's willing to research the topic calmly.

The resistance will carry on, and it will certainly be harsh, if only because people only appreciate things when they're ready to appreciate them. At the moment, many people simply fail to hear what we say about Esperanto: their minds aren't ready, so what we say goes in one ear and out the other. Yes, there will be strong resistance. But in the long run, in all likelihood, it won't win out over the facts.

(Abridged from a talk given by Claude Piron in 1998.)

Frequently asked questions about Esperanto

In this section you'll find answers to some common questions about Esperanto

How did Esperanto get its name?

At first the language was simply called *Lingvo Internacia* (International Language). When Zamenhof published the language, he used the pseudonym *Doktoro Esperanto* (which means "Doctor Hoping"). As a result, people sometimes talked about "Dr Esperanto's language". Later on, they just said "Esperanto", and that got adopted as the name of the language.



Why learn Esperanto?

People choose to learn Esperanto for various reasons. Language lovers are often curious about Esperanto's grammar and that's why they start studying the language. Other people become interested in Esperanto because, after failing to learn a particular foreign language, they want to try an easier one. Some have heard about the "inner idea", and so they learn Esperanto to help support a more peaceful and interconnected world. Young people are often interested in travelling to other countries to make new friends there, and Esperanto is a great option for doing this.

How many people speak Esperanto?

There's no clear way to count the number of Esperanto speakers, because not all of them are members of organizations. Besides, it depends how you define "speaking Esperanto": do you only count those people who regularly speak it to a high standard, or do you count anyone who has a basic knowledge of Esperanto, even if they hardly ever use it? Estimates of the number of Esperanto speakers in the world are therefore rather variable, from tens of thousands to several million. Whatever the true figure, there are enough Esperanto speakers in the world to form a lively international community.

How do I learn Esperanto?

If you have a good Internet connection, we recommend starting at www.lernu.net, where you can find several interactive courses for beginners, in many languages. If you prefer a course in the form of a book, you can order one from an online bookshop. Section 7.3 has a list of online bookshops that sell Esperanto books, and a few recommendations of popular instructional texts in English.

If you'd prefer to learn Esperanto in person, you can contact your local or regional Esperanto association to find out when and where courses will be taking place. Sections 7.1 and 7.2 list some websites that you can visit to locate Esperanto clubs and courses near you. Once you've learned a bit of Esperanto, it's fun to use the language with other people, either online or at an Esperanto event. Contact your local club!

Which languages does Esperanto most resemble?

Most of the word roots come from Europe, especially the Romance languages. But Esperanto's grammar has many features that are not typical of European languages, and these make it quite similar to such languages as Turkish, Swahili, or even Chinese.



Does Esperanto have a logo or symbol?

Yes, there are several. The green star is the oldest and most widely used: it appears on the Esperanto flag, among other places. The colour green stands for hope, and the five-pointed star represents the five continents. A more recent symbol is the so-called "jubilee logo", which was the winner of a contest held at the time of Esperanto's hundredth anniversary.

Is Esperanto easy to learn?

Yes, compared with national languages. But, as always, a lot depends on the individual student and on how many other languages they've already learned. In our experience, learning a new language is always a challenge – it's never "very easy". This is also true for Esperanto, although it's much less awkward to master than a typical national or ethnic language. Even people who've never really managed to learn a foreign language can learn Esperanto! But of course you have to study and practise a lot if you want to speak the language fluently and correctly.

Why do some linguists say negative things about Esperanto?

Linguists are the people best placed to understand the complexities of language. And this may be exactly why so many of them – who are otherwise extremely competent – fail to believe that Esperanto can work as a fully fledged living language, and that it's worthy of any attention or research. Languages are such complex and delicate things that it seems amazingly

unlikely that a genuinely rich, living language could have emerged from one young man's project. (Zamenhof was 27 when he published Esperanto, having spent more than ten years working on it.) So it's natural to be sceptical. But if you look into the reality of it, you'll see that Esperanto works incredibly well for global communication. It would be great if more linguists and researchers decided to study Esperanto and research its community in the future.

Can I learn Esperanto at school and university?

In some countries, yes. Many Esperantists argue that learning Esperanto in primary school makes it easier for people to learn other foreign languages later. Studying a relatively easy language gives students confidence in learning languages, and the fact that Esperanto's grammar is so regular adds to their understanding of grammatical structures and concepts. Several independent studies have reached this conclusion, and it would be interesting to see the results of further research into Esperanto's ability to help people learn languages.



Can you tell what country an Esperanto speaker comes from?

You can often guess this from a person's accent when they speak Esperanto, but not always. Some people have a "neutral" accent.

How many native Esperanto speakers are there?

There are something like a thousand people who have Esperanto as one of their mother tongues. Often this is because their parents come from different countries and met at an Esperanto event. The parents use Esperanto together at home, and when they then have a child, they want to go on speaking Esperanto together. Perhaps the most common situation is where one parent always speaks Esperanto to the child, while the other parent (the immigrant) uses their native language with them. In society, the child uses the local or national language. The child becomes natively trilingual.

Wouldn't it be better to create a new, even fairer language for global communication?

It's not easy to assemble a good basis for a language. Linguists – the people who know the most about languages – don't necessarily have the talent for creating a language themselves: their speciality is in *analysing* languages. Creation and analysis are two very different things. Several people have constructed new languages – even a group of linguists has had a go – but so far the results have been less successful than Esperanto. Think about Mozart and his music – people with genius like that don't come along very often! Zamenhof was rather similar. He had an extraordinary gift for creating languages, and he managed to prepare the basis of a language that's turned out to work much better than all other attempts. Besides, if the seed of a newly published language is to germinate, it needs a long period of widespread use in every conceivable situation. Languages that lack a basic ideology (like the one Zamenhof gave to Esperanto) have less chance of acquiring the community of speakers they need if they're to come alive. This process has already occurred in Esperanto, and the language is now ready. It's not *perfect*, but it's still an extremely suitable and fair way for people to communicate internationally.

Isn't English good enough for international communication?

English is very useful for communicating globally in many situations. But the fact remains that not everyone succeeds in becoming fluent in English, even after many years of study. It's a particularly difficult challenge for people whose native languages are very unlike English. (If you've ever been to Korea or Turkey, for example, you know what we're talking about.) Esperanto is easier to learn than ethnic languages, whether you're young or old. Furthermore, Esperanto is not tied to any specific national culture. This is an important advantage for a language that serves as a bridge between ethnic groups: they can use it to communicate on an equal footing.

But hasn't Esperanto already had its chance?

It's true that in the early 1920s, the League of Nations (a predecessor of the UN) almost adopted Esperanto as one of its working languages. It's also true that several politicians became interested in Esperanto in the thirties and forties. But today, very few politicians have any interest in it. Maybe Esperanto will never again have the chance to become a working language in a large international organization. But maybe the situation will change in the future: maybe Esperanto will become ever more popular among people interested in creating a new world community with closer, friendlier relationships between ethnic groups. We can't predict the future with any certainty. But we can hope... We Esperantists are good at that! (The word "Esperanto" means a person who hopes.)

Local information about Esperanto

This section contains contact information for Esperanto organizations in several English-speaking countries. Many large cities, and some small towns, have Esperanto clubs that hold regular meetings. The best way to find these clubs is to contact your country's national Esperanto association: many of them even list their local clubs online. Local clubs are a great way to learn Esperanto, practise the language, and meet Esperanto speakers in your area. Many national Esperanto organizations also offer bookshops that make it easy to buy books in or about Esperanto.

Organizations and clubs

Most countries have a national Esperanto organization that can help you find clubs in your region.

Australia: aea.esperanto.org.au

Canada: www.esperanto.ca

Ireland: www.esperanto.ie

New Zealand: www.esperanto.org.nz

South Africa: www.esperanto.za.org

UK: www.esperanto-gb.org

USA: www.esperanto.org

Other countries: www.uea.org/landoj

Courses and events

Esperanto clubs in many cities offer regular courses. There are also some residential courses that last several weeks. Here are some links that may help you:

Australia: aesk.esperanto.org.au

Canada: www.esperanto.ca/en/servoj

New Zealand: www.esperanto.org.nz/about_nzea.html

UK: www.esperantoeducation.com

USA: www.esperanto.org/nask,

www.esperanto-usa.org/en/node/6

Many national Esperanto associations hold annual conventions that last two or three days or even a week. These events are a chance to meet friends, visit new places, and attend talks on interesting topics, all in Esperanto. They also give leaders the chance to meet with members and plan the next year. Organizations often

hold a special gathering around the time of Zamenhof's birthday, 15 December. On a smaller scale, many cities have informal clubs that meet up once a month or so. Contact your local association for details of upcoming meetings.

Finding books about Esperanto

Not many booksellers carry books about Esperanto, but you can sometimes find some in the language sections of large bookshops, and at major online booksellers such as Amazon. The best approach is to use dedicated Esperanto websites.

There are plenty of Esperanto textbooks and dictionaries written in English. We recommend browsing the stock of an online book service, but here are a few recommendations: "Esperanto: Learning and Using the International Language", by David Richardson (2004); "Step by Step in Esperanto" by Montagu Butler (1991); "English-Esperanto-English Dictionary" by J.C. Wells (2010); and "Comprehensive English-Esperanto Dictionary", by Peter Benson (1995).

These are the online or mail-order book services available in English-speaking countries:

Australia: libroservo.esperanto.org.au

Canada: www.esperanto.qc.ca/katalogo

UK: www.esperanto-gb.org/eab/bookcat.htm

USA: esperantousa.hypermart.net/retbutiko

Worldwide: katalogo.uea.org

Esperanto estas ... www.esperantoestas.net

Find out about the international language Esperanto with these six films – they're short and fun!

Esperanto estas ... (Esperanto is...)



... a language that's useful for everything (Part 1 – 01:43 min)

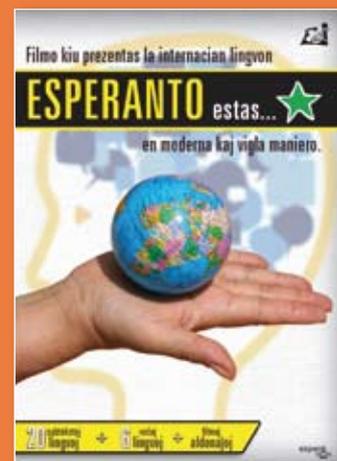
... a language with many features (Part 2 – 08:01 min)

... a language used in many ways (Part 3 – 06:23 min)

... worth learning for everyone (Part 4 – 13:22)

... a language with a colourful movement (Part 5 – 04:12 min)

... a language of the future (Part 6 – 09:31 min)



ESPERANTO IS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE USED ON EVERY CONTINENT



"I feel part of a worldwide community"

Erin Piatetski,
USA



"Esperanto is part of my normal life"

Renato Corsetti,
Italy

"My main interest in Esperanto lies with its culture"

Rogener Pavinski,
Brazil



"Esperanto has been my job for 7 years"

Katalin Kovács,
Netherlands / Hungary



"Esperanto makes me feel like a true world citizen"

Jean Codjo,
Canada / Benin



"Esperanto has really boosted my interest in other countries and cultures"

Marcos Cramer,
Germany

"Thanks to Esperanto I've enjoyed many close friendships abroad"

Satoo Reiko,
Japan



"Esperanto has shown me a new way to look at the world"

Trinh Hong Hanh,
Vietnam



"Learning Esperanto led me to live on a different continent"

Russ Williams,
Poland / USA



"You can even find Esperanto in villages with no electricity"

Vlad'ka Chvátalová,
Belgium / Czech Republic

"Esperanto has given me friends all over the world"

Li Jianhua,
China



"Esperanto makes international relationships much easier"

Kong Kil-yoon,
Korea



"I was captivated by Esperanto's internal logic"

Zsófia Kóródy,
Germany / Hungary



"For me Esperanto is a great inspiration"

Hokan Lundberg,
Sweden

**IN THIS BOOKLET, YOU CAN READ ABOUT ESPERANTO
AND HOW IT'S USED BY PEOPLE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES**