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## ABSTRACT

A course on international communication and constructed languages is described. General topics covered in the course included the roles various national languages have played in international communication, special forms of English, language practices and policies in international organizations and conferences, and the history and classification of constructed languages. Esperanto was taught as a specific example of a constructed language. Included in the course description are: (1) an outline of the course structure, (2) a list of the lectures given on various aspects of international communication, and (3) a description of the Esperanto part of the course. A bibliography of the University of Illinois holdings on these topics is included. (Author/AMH)

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A Linguistics Course on  
International Communication and Constructed Languages

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Introduction

During the spring 1979 semester at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), we taught a linguistics course titled "International Communication and Constructed Languages", open both to undergraduates and to graduate students. When communication between people with differing first languages is treated in linguistics courses, it is usually limited to bilingual contact situations, including pidgins. This new course, however, emphasized global aspects of communication. Historical and present mechanisms of international communication were discussed, including the international use of national and of constructed languages. Because it is representative of many of the languages which have been constructed for use as interlanguages, and because it has a sizable literature and number of speakers, Esperanto was studied in some detail.

It was hoped that this course would appeal to a broad range of students, and this goal was largely met. Of the 17 credit students, 7 were linguistics majors, 7 were in engineering or computer science, two were in general liberal arts, and one was in classics. There were 11 undergraduates and 6 graduate students. There were also a half-dozen auditors who came more or less regularly, including a couple of language professors.

Course structure

The course met for 80 minutes twice a week. Usually one session was devoted to general aspects of international

communication and the other to learning Esperanto. There is no one textbook which adequately treats the topic of international communication, so we gave the students an annotated bibliography of University of Illinois library holdings in the areas of international communication and constructed languages, plus a reading list of particularly important titles. Both are given in an appendix.

For the Esperanto portion of the course we required the textbook Teach Yourself Esperanto by John Cresswell and John Hartley and the companion bilingual Esperanto-English dictionary by John Wells, both in the "Teach-Yourself" series published by Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., London (published in the United States by David McKay Company Inc., New York).

### General topics

We present below a list of the lectures given on various aspects of international communication. We were extremely fortunate to have knowledgeable guest lecturers for some of the topics, as noted in the listing (unless otherwise stated, the speakers were from our campus, and if no one is mentioned, one of us gave the lecture). The topics were chosen in an attempt to cover many different aspects of the nature of international communication, the problems that arise, and the various kinds of solutions actually used or proposed for treating these problems. Because the course had no formal prerequisites and the students had diverse backgrounds, an attempt was made to avoid highly technical terminology.

Organizational meeting; structure of the course.

Overview of the language problem.

Statement of the problem; ancient, national, and constructed languages as interlanguages.

Introduction to constructed languages; overview of Esperanto.

Specific attention to the agglutinative character of Esperanto, in comparison with other constructed and national languages.

Greek, Latin, and French as interlanguages (Henry Kahane).

Greek in Rome; Latin and French in the Middle Ages and Renaissance; French in modern Europe.

English as interlanguage (Braj Kachru).

Present role and future prospects, both in the developed and in the developing countries.

Special forms of English.

Basic, Special, Controlled, and pidgin Englishes.

History and classification of constructed languages.

Philosophical, a priori, and a posteriori; schematic and naturalistic; constructed aspects of national languages.

Language practices at international conferences.

Simultaneous and consecutive interpretation; choice of languages; formal vs. informal situations; problems of inequality in conversations between first- and second-language speakers of an internationally-used language.

Language policies in international organizations.

Selection, status, and translation of official languages at the United Nations and in the Common Market (assisted by Paul Gaeng); policies of national governments in relation to languages used in international organizations.

The Esperanto speech community (Richard Wood, Southeast Missouri State University).

A non-ethnic, non-territorial speech community; the Esperanto movement and types of users; status of native speakers of Esperanto.

Esperanto translations of poetry (Pierre Ullman, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

Esperanto poetry; included detailed comparison of the Esperanto translation of a Garcia Lorca poem with translations into English, French, and German.

Esperanto literature (Margaret Hagler, Lincoln Land Community College, Springfield).

History and examples of original and translated poetry and prose.

Computational processing of Esperanto.

Speech synthesis and machine translation, including use as an intermediate language in machine translation.

Phonetic universals (Chin-Wu Kim).

Optimal sound systems for constructed languages, in terms of choosing those sounds and clusters common to many languages.

The constructed language Loglan.

An example of a language constructed for a purpose other than international communication.

## Esperanto

By giving the students a solid grounding in Esperanto, we were able to go rather deeply into the nature of the trade-offs and compromises involved in constructing a language. We also were able to discuss other constructed languages on a comparative basis.

We normally covered one chapter of "Teach Yourself Esperanto" in a class period (of 80 minutes). We covered the first 13 chapters in detail and merely summarized the last three chapters in order to free up time at the end of the course to read a short story together ("La Tradukmaŝino", by Konisi Gaku, reprinted in his collection Vage tra la

Dimensioj, Japano Esperanta Librokooperativo, 1976). For written homework, the students wrote Esperanto translations of the English sentences in the supplementary exercises for Teach Yourself Esperanto made up by Pierre Ullman and available from the American Association of the Teachers of Esperanto. These exercises are more challenging than those in the textbook.

As advocated in the Columbia University study of Esperanto teaching in high schools and colleges, led by Edward Thorndike (Language Learning -- see bibliography), we started with an overview of the complete structure of Esperanto, so that the students had a framework within which to orient their studies. It would be impossible to describe the structure of German or Russian in an introductory lecture, but this technique is highly suitable for Esperanto. This made it possible to work through a couple of jokes in Esperanto during each class period (taken from Bona Rido, Axel A. Helm, Eldona Societo Esperanto, Malmö, Sweden, 1965). In this way the students reviewed the full language each week. The success of this procedure may be gauged from the following incident. The textbook introduces the infinitive very late, and this feature had not been formally discussed before the mid-term exam. An English sentence ("Whom did you want to see?") to be translated into Esperanto on the exam unintentionally involved an infinitive, yet all the students handled this feature correctly, and no student even noticed the "unfairness"!

It is also noteworthy that by the end of the semester, with only 80 minutes of class instruction per week, the students were able to enjoy translating a short story together. The Columbia study claimed that one year of college Esperanto is roughly equivalent to four years of college study of a national language. Applying this factor of four to our half-semester of Esperanto, we should perhaps have expected a proficiency level equivalent to one year of a national language, which is approximately what we found, at least for the written language. We did not have adequate time for much practice in speaking, especially since the class was large, but the students did read well orally, with good pronunciation.

Computer-based tutoring on the PLATO system was available to supplement the first five basic chapters of the textbook, thanks to a fine set of interactive materials written by Judith Sherwood. These materials reviewed the grammar and vocabulary presented in the textbook and gave the student practice in translating words and sentences. The students were encouraged to work through the PLATO materials before class discussion of the chapter, and this

preparation made the class discussions more valuable, since the students had already had considerable practice with the topic. In addition to writing full treatments of the first five chapters, Judith Sherwood also prepared computer-based vocabulary drills for the remaining textbook chapters. An unusual feature of some of the PLATO materials was the instructional use of speech synthesized from Esperanto text.

### Examinations

Some additional insight into the nature of the course can be gained by giving examples of exam questions. On the mid-term and final exams students were asked essay questions such as "Comment on the major advantages and major disadvantages of the use of English in international communication"; "Describe the major types of constructed languages and name at least one example of each type"; "Describe the nature of language problems in international conferences and the kind of translation services used"; and "Discuss the compatibility of Esperanto with various aspects of handling languages in computer systems". The students were asked to answer any four of six essay questions, and giving them a choice compensated a little for their differing backgrounds. The exams also contained English and Esperanto sentences to be translated. On the final exam the Esperanto sentences took the form of a reading passage from the textbook.

The linguistics students did significantly better than the other students on the exams, despite some efforts on our part to find ways for compensating for the differing backgrounds. This kind of problem must be kept in mind when designing courses with broad appeal.

### Exportability

Several attractive aspects of the course owed their existence to unusual local and regional circumstances, including stimulating guest lecturers knowledgeable in highly specialized subjects, the availability of the PLATO computer-based education system and its Esperanto lessons, unusually good university library holdings, and the enthusiasm of a core of students in the Campus Esperanto Society. Obviously this particular combination of circumstances is not easily exportable or replicable. Nevertheless it should be possible to adapt our experiences to create courses on international communication in other settings. The effort seems worthwhile, because the topic is interesting to a

broad range of students and is highly relevant to many concerns of theoretical and applied linguistics, particularly in the area of language planning, and should also be of significant interest to sociologists and to students of communications.

#### Useful addresses

We obtained the Esperanto textbooks from the Esperanto League for North America, Box 1129, El Cerrito, California 94530, which is a convenient source for Esperanto books, periodicals, records, and tapes. The American Association of Teachers of Esperanto (Mary E. Myers, 253 E. Delaware Place 21B, Chicago, Illinois 60611) publishes a quarterly newsletter on the teaching of Esperanto. The Esperanto Studies Association of America, 749 East Beaumont Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53217, is a new organization open to scholars working in the field of Esperanto studies.

#### Bibliography and reading list

We append an annotated bibliography in the form of a listing of University of Illinois library holdings in the areas of international communication and of constructed languages, prepared with the aid of the Tonkin research bibliography described in it. Another major American collection is the George Alan Connor Esperanto Collection at the University of Oregon Library (Eugene, Oregon 97403), for which a catalog is available from the Library for five dollars.

We also append a student reading list made up of items in the main bibliography plus some additional materials referring to specific lecture topics.

#### Acknowledgements

We gratefully thank Paul Gaeng, Margaret Hagler, Braj Kachru, Henry Kahane, Chin-Wu Kim, Pierre Ullman, and Richard Wood for their generous help in this course. We are greatly indebted to Judith Sherwood for the enormous amount of care she lavished on her computer-based tutoring materials.

University of Illinois Library Materials on  
International Communication and Constructed Languages

The University of Illinois main library has significant holdings dealing with international communication and constructed languages. In addition to the general materials listed here, the stacks (location 408.9) contain many novels and other literary works in Esperanto, both original and translated. There are also many textbooks and dictionaries for other constructed languages, though not literary works (most constructed languages have no literature at all, and the few that do have very little, with the exception of Esperanto). The stacks also contain many Esperanto periodicals, including a valuable collection of the pre-war Hungarian "Literatura Mondo". Unfortunately the library literary collection is very dated, with most materials being pre-war, so that little hint is seen of the richness of current book and periodical publishing in Esperanto.

An indispensable aid for compiling the following list was Humphrey Tonkin's "Esperanto and International Language Problems: A Research Bibliography" (1977; Esperantic Studies Foundation, Inc., Washington, D. C.; 016.4089/T61e).

General Materials

(Branch library is specified if not in main stacks)

Alessandro Bausani, *Le Lingue Inventate* (1974; 408.9/B3291). By an Esperanto-speaking Italian linguist. Unusual treatment of all kinds of linguistic invention, in natural as well as in constructed languages, including the linguistic inventions of children. A German translation was published earlier than the Italian original: *Geheim- und Universalsprachen: Entwicklung und Typologie* (1970; 408.9/B3291Gg).

Detlev Blanke, *Zur wissenschaftlichen Beschäftigung mit Plansprachen I & II*, *Zeitschrift für Phonetik, Sprachwissenschaft und Kommunikationsforschung*, vol. 30, p. 122-33 and 389-98 (1977; 414.05/ZE). An overview of constructed languages, with emphasis on linguistic treatments of the subject. The articles are especially rich in references to works in German and Russian.

F. Brittain, *Latin in Church: the History of its Pronunciation* (1955; 479/B771).. Contains some information on the

use of Latin as an interlanguage in the Middle Ages and during the Renaissance, with reference to differing national forms of pronunciation.

Pierre Burney, *Les Langues Internationales* (1962; 408.9/B931). In the "Que sais-je?" series. Discusses historic international roles of national languages as well as discussing constructed languages. There is a heavy emphasis on the role of French, and there are factual errors in the description of Esperanto.

L. J. Calvet, *Linguistique et Colonialisme: petit traité de glottophagie* (1974; 401/C131). An attack on linguistic colonialism, with emphasis on the role of Parisian French in relation to the other languages of France (Occitan, Breton, etc.) and to the languages of former French colonies in Africa.

L. Couturat and L. Leau, *Histoire de la Langue Universelle* (1907; 408.9/C83h). A major history of constructed languages from Descartes onwards.

H. S. Eaton, *The Educational Value of an Artificial Language*, *Modern Language Journal*, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 87-94 (1927; 405/MOJ; *Modern Languages Library*). Discusses the use of Esperanto as preparation for foreign language study.

Eco-Logos, formerly *International Language Reporter* (408.905/INL). This newsletter frequently contains articles dealing with constructed languages. For example, see articles by W. A. V. van Themaat: "International languages and literature" (1974, no. 4); "Relative merits of Esperanto and Interlingua" (1975, no. 4); and "Productive word-formation in four natural and two constructed languages" (1977, no. 4). The last article shows that Esperanto uses derived words twice as often as does German, four times as often as English, 6-10 times as often as Interlingua, and 20-30 times as often as French. Reference is made to a thesis by Detlev Blanke, "Plansprache und Nationalsprache" (Berlin 1975) for comparisons of word-formation in German and Esperanto. Another interesting article is by B. Golden, "Political factors in the international language movement" (1977, no. 4), which traces the political history of Esperanto.

Esperanto (408.905/Espe). Current and back issues of the monthly review published by the Universal Esperanto Association, Rotterdam.

Esperanto as an International Auxiliary Language (1922; 341.1/L471Se). Report of the General Secretariat of the

League of Nations, adopted by the Third Assembly. The report documents the status of Esperanto at the time and summarizes the advantages of encouraging general use of the language. There are interesting appendices detailing experiments made by the Paris Chamber of Commerce and in British schools.

A. Fisher, Modern Languages by Way of Esperanto, Modern Languages, vol. 20, no. 2 (1920-21; 405/MOL). Discusses trial use of Esperanto for foreign-language preparation in a British school.

S. Gaselee, The Language of Diplomacy (1939; 341.7/G211). The third chapter describes standard language practices in diplomacy, with emphasis on the roles of French and English.

A. Gode and H. E. Blair, Interlingua: a grammar of the international language (1955; 408.9/G541; Modern Languages Library). A description of one of the best-known "naturalistic" constructed languages, produced by the International Auxiliary Language Association of the United States.

Thomas Goodman, Esperanto: Threat or Ally?, Foreign Language Annals, April 1978, p. 201-202 (407.05/F0, Modern Languages Library). Discusses the possible benefits to foreign language teaching which Esperanto instruction may bring, and describes briefly the present program in Maryland schools.

A. L. Guérard, A Short History of the International Language Movement (1922; 408.9/G93s). A history of the early period.

C. W. Hayes, J. Ornstein, and W. W. Gage, ABC's of Languages and Linguistics (1977; 410/O6a; Modern Languages Library). Chapter 10 discusses constructed languages.

A. A. Hill, Esperanto aŭ Dubanto, Texas Quarterly, vol. 3, p. 143-149 (1960; 051/TEX). Expresses doubts about the possible role of a constructed language.

M. I. Isaev (ed.), Problemy Interlingvistiki (1976; 408.908/P94). A collection of papers by linguists of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, including discussions of the history and typology of constructed languages. Much of the book deals with Esperanto.

F. Lo Jacomo, Le Prédicat Adjectif en Espéranto, Linguistique vol. 13, no. 2, p. 99-108 (1977; 405/LINGU; Modern Languages Library). Uses a comparison of Esperanto participles with adjectives to explore the relationship between Esperanto words and morphemes.

Pierre Janton, L'Espéranto (1973; 408.92/J26e). In the "Que sais-je?" series. A popular treatment of Esperanto, including a discussion of its literature. There is a brief history of constructed languages. Janton is a French linguist who has done research on the structure of Esperanto.

O. Jespersen, An International Language (1928; 408.9/J491). The first part of the book (reprinted in his Selected Writings) deals with the need for a constructed interlanguage and with history. The second part describes Jespersen's proposed "Novial". Jespersen is perhaps the only major professional linguist who has produced a constructed language, and his studies are therefore unusually valuable.

O. Jespersen, Selected Writings (1962; 408/J494/196-). Contains several of Jespersen's articles on constructed languages, including an essay titled "Nature and Art in Languages", in which he points out the many artificial elements of national languages and the many naturalistic elements of constructed languages.

R. G. Kent, Latin as the International Auxiliary Language (1926; 470/K411). Discusses the need for an auxiliary language, whether national, constructed, or ancient, and gives arguments for Latin as being preferable to national languages or Esperanto.

Language Learning, Summary of a Report to the International Auxiliary Language Association (1933; 408.9/C721). This summarizes a multi-year study by the Division of Psychology of the Institute of Educational Research of Teachers College, Columbia University. The study was led by the noted educator and psychologist Edward Thorndike. High school students, college students, and adults were taught Esperanto. Control groups were used to make comparisons of the ease of learning a constructed language compared with national languages, and attempts were also made to measure the impact of Esperanto learning on the later study of English and foreign languages. A key result was that the level attained in four years of college study of a national language should be reached in Esperanto in less than a year. The authors make interesting suggestions on how best to teach Esperanto, pointing out that its regularity makes possible fruitful approaches that would be quite unsuitable in the teaching of national languages.

N. A. McQuown, A Comparative Study of Esperanto from the Standpoint of Modern German (1936; 408.9/M24c). This University of Illinois master's thesis compares vocabulary, word

formation, and grammar of the two languages. One of the conclusions is that only about 4% of the Esperanto vocabulary is of German origin, yet that about 78% of the vocabulary is recognized by an educated German (due to borrowing from Latin and Romance languages). A number of strong similarities in word formation and grammar indicates significant German influence on the structure of Esperanto. For additional comparisons, see the summary of recent results in the article by van Themaat (see Eco-logos).

N. A. McQuown, a review of Henry Jacob's "A Planned Auxiliary Language", Language, vol 26, p. 175-185 (1950; 405/Lan), reprint in D. Hymes, Language in Culture and Society (1964; 401/H991), which includes a useful bibliography. A good brief overview of the major constructed languages. McQuown's article on "International Languages" in the 1974 Encyclopedia Britannica is a similar treatment of the topic.

Paul Mitrovich, An Essay on Interlinguistics (1954; 408.9/M69pE). The author's stated aim is to stimulate study of a synthesis of the best features of the main constructed languages. Unfortunately, the essay degenerates into a mere catalog of possible word forms.

C. K. Ogden, Basic English versus the Artificial Languages (1935; 428.25/Og2be). Contains an interesting criticism of Esperanto by a former Esperantist, Paul D. Hugon. Hugon's criticisms are oriented toward the difficulties English speakers have with Esperanto. There are also brief critiques of Occidental and of Novial.

J. Ornstein, Passport from Babel, Texas Quarterly, vol. 3, p. 150-155 (1960; 051/TEX). Brief review of the history and status of constructed languages.

Mario Pei, One Language for the World (1958; 408.9/P350). An overview of the language problem, with discussion of the various candidates for auxiliary use, including national as well as constructed languages. There is an extensive bibliography. In this book Pei shows no particular preference for one solution over another, but in later articles he came to favor Esperanto strongly. An excellent pro-Esperanto pamphlet by Pei is "Wanted: A World Language" (1969; 408.9/P35w; Modern Languages Library).

E. Sapir, L. Bloomfield, F. Boas, J. L. Gerig, G. P. Krapp, Memorandum on the Problem of an International Auxiliary Language, in Romanic Review Vol. 16 (1925; 840.5/R0; Modern Languages Library). A discussion by noted linguists of the

desirable characteristics of an auxiliary language, with suggestions for specific experiments to test their ideas. They stress the advantages of an analytical structure similar to that of Chinese.

E. Svadost, *Kak Vozniknet Sveobshii Yazik?* (How will a universal language arise?) (1968; 408.9/Svlk). Much of the book deals with constructed languages. There is an extensive bibliography. The basic thesis of the author is that a world language is inevitable under world communism, and that this inevitable development should be guided by means of careful planning by Soviet linguists.

H. N. Shenton, *Cosmopolitan Conversation: The Language Problems of International Conferences* (1933; 341.1/Sh4c). A comprehensive picture of language practices in international conferences in the 1920's. Chapters 8, 11, and 12 are especially pertinent. Despite the title, the problems of informal conversation at conferences are not discussed: the focus is rather on problems associated with formal speeches and publications. There is a great deal of information on the use of Esperanto in conferences of the period.

H. N. Shenton, E. Sapir, and O. Jespersen, *International Communication: A Symposium on the Language Problem*. (1931; 408.9/In8). The sociologist Shenton contributes what is essentially a summary of his book, *Cosmopolitan Conversation*. The well-known linguist Sapir in an essay, *The Function of an International Auxiliary Language*, explains why a constructed interlanguage is both feasible and necessary. Jespersen's essay, *Interlinguistics*, describes the cooperative efforts of linguists and interlinguists to bring together the various auxiliary language projects. Sapir's essay was reprinted in his *Culture, Language, and Personality* (1949; 408/Sa6c; Undergrad Library), and Jespersen's was reprinted in his *Selected Writings* (1962; 408/1494/1962).

S. F. Starr, *English Dethroned*, *Change Magazine*, May 1978, p. 26-31 (378.05/CHA; Education Library). Shows evidence for a decline in the status of English, and makes a plea for increased study of foreign languages by Americans.

M. A. Tamers, *The Language Gap: Must We All Speak English?* (*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, March 1971, p. 38; 341.05/BU vol. 27; Physics Library). Points out the inequity of the partial monopoly of English in international science, and characterizes as a kind of "brain-drain" the attraction of large numbers of university students to the United States from other countries to learn English. He calls for a

multi-lingual policy and rejects Esperanto (which he claims is unfairly too easy for Romance-language speakers).

R. G. White, Toward the Construction of a Lingua Humana, Current Anthropology, vol. 13, p. 113-123 (1972; 572.05/CUR; Education Library). Proposes using a small number of sounds, as in several Polynesian languages. Includes a general discussion of the problem of an auxiliary language. White's article is followed by several responses from other writers.

L. Zamenhof's original brochure in English translation (408.9/Z141Ep). The first version of this introduction to Esperanto was in Russian (1887).

## Reading list

- Gode, A. and H. E. Blair. 1955. *Interlingua: A Grammar of the International Language.*
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- 1971. *The Esperanto Language as a Literary Medium.* Indiana University Dissertation.
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- 1962. *Selected Writings.*
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- McQuown, N. A. 1936. *A Comparative Study of Esperanto from the Standpoint of Modern German.* University of Illinois Master's thesis.
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