Fiat Lingua

<u>Title:</u> The Contemporary Esperanto Speech Community

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<u>MS Date:</u> 01-12-2013

<u>FL Date:</u> 01-01-2013

<u>FL Number:</u> FL-000010-01

<u>Citation:</u> Solis, Adelina. 2013. "The Contemporary
Esperanto Speech Community."
FL-000010-01, *Fiat Lingua*, <http://
fiatlingua.org>. Web. 01 Jan. 2013.

The Contemporary Esperanto Speech Community

by
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Chapter 1:
Introduction

When we think about invented languages, we may think of childhood games. Children often generate a secret language to keep foes or adults from understanding, but this childhood foray is more often a short-lived code based on the language already spoken by all parties, rather than a true new language. We might also think of hubris and high ideals and failure: history is littered with the tomes of constructed languages that failed to attain the popularity their creators desired. However, as a nineteen year old in a divided city, Ludwik Zamenhof did create a new language, one that he hoped would bring the people of the world together on an equal plane. It would break down linguistic barriers between people, and pave a path towards peace. He was so impacted by the language-based social division around him that, along with his language, which he released in 1887 under the pseudonym of Dr. Esperanto – from the word in his invented language for 'one who hopes' – he created an ideology of equality and brotherhood that he hoped all of his followers would embrace.

1.1 Definitions

First, let us set forth some terminology. A 'universal language', sometimes also called 'global', 'world', or 'international', is one that is (intended to be) spoken by every person on earth. There have been many attempts to designate, develop, construct, or implement a language as a universal language. Proposed universal languages usually fall within one of five approaches. The first is to use a pre-existing natural language[1], usually a language with political clout or many speakers, or the native language of whoever is making the argument for its implementation. The second:

> To use two or more natural languages, either as zonal tongues to serve certain areas of the earth, which would not give us *an* international language, but a series of geographically separated international languages; or to be learned bilingually or trilingually by all the peoples of the earth (Pei 1958: 96).

The third approach is to modify a natural language and output something more standardized and easier to learn. Modifications may range from limiting the lexicon, making the spelling phonetic, or simplifying the grammar. Fourthly, to combine natural languages: "the mixture is sometimes simple, as when it is suggested that one language be spoken without change, but be written with the script of another tongue" (Pei 1958: 96). Franco-Venetian or pidgins are examples of this fourth class, but are complex fusions of phonologies, grammars, and vocabularies.

> Last and most numerous are the fully constructed tongues, which may come close to the modified national language or the mixed language, or may utterly depart from the natural tongues … these constructed tongues usually reveal a blend of many natural languages combined with arbitrary features of grammar and word-building (Pei 1958: 96).

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[1] A 'natural language' is defined in contrast to a constructed language. A similar term is 'national language,' but some natural languages are not spoken by an entire nation, or do not have governmental backing, so the latter term is insufficiently inclusive.

Languages in the third through fifth classes are commonly referred to as constructed languages[2]. Other terms include planned, artificial, or invented languages, as the languages come into existence through the work of a particular person, who either completely fabricates language or knits together preexisting language elements according to his or her aesthetic. In this paper, the terms 'universal language' and 'constructed language' will be used[3] except when quoting an author with a different preferred term. It is important to note that a language's aim to become universal is not necessarily to be at the expense of other languages. When this distinction is especially important, the term 'auxiliary language' will be used.

1.2 Political support for a universal language

Enabling universal understanding has been a goal pursued by many, be they language inventors, economists, or those in the political sphere. While language inventors have motivations ranging from personal fame to facilitating trade or world peace, those who support constructed languages have their own reasons to do so. Political climate has often served as a push for a global language, be it natural or constructed. Mario Pei explores this facet of universal language movements in his

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[2] For more on the significance and connotations of this and other terms, see Detlev Blanke's, "The Term 'Planned Language'".

[3] Blanke concludes that 'international language' is the most appropriate term, but I feel that to call a language 'international' does not convey the full scope of intended use. If a language were used in two countries, it would still be international. Esperanto is intended to be used in all nations, therefore I choose to call it and any other language with similar intent 'universal.'

Blanke also concludes that 'planned language' is the most accurate or appropriate term but, for the purposes of this paper, I disagree. I wish to emphasize the role of the creator. One option would be to use the term 'invented language,' but I find that the word 'invented' obscures the sustained efforts of the language creator. Instead, 'constructed language' best conveys both the presence of a creator and the process of creation, or construction.

biased – if not outright propagandistic – book, *One Language for the World*. In the

chapter titled, 'What a world language will do for us', Pei uses a rhetoric common

among those advocating the adoption and implementation of a global language:

> A world language for the future is for a future world of peace and
> international cooperation, in which communications and the interchange of
> ideas will have their fullest development. By itself, the world language can
> never bring about such a world. But it can effectively aid in bringing it about,
> through the removal of linguistic and even, to some extent, of ideological
> misunderstandings, and through the creation of a healthy atmosphere wherein
> men regard one another as fellow human beings (1958: 50-51).

He waxes on:

> Short of a foolproof system for preventing war and ensuring perpetual peace,
> coupled with freedom for the individual, the adoption of an international
> language is the greatest gift with which we could collectively endow our
> children and their descendants (Pei 1958: 60).

Pei's opinion is clear, but what is his evidence? He asserts that the existence of a

universal language would enable a remarkably rapid transmission of information,

disseminated around the world in a single language rather than going through

countless tedious translations. He discusses how much easier life would be for

tourists and business travelers, who would be able to communicate with more than a

guidebook's selection of phrases. Pei describes the time and effort required to learn

just one language, and how this investment often resembles a form of academic

roulette, to attempt to identify which people and therefore which language might

come into power and become worthwhile to study (1958: 21-23). Furthermore,

writing in 1958, six decades away from our present, Pei sees the pressing effects of

globalization or a shrinking world on our communicative needs (1958: 35).

    After thoroughly addressing the present need for a universal language, Pei

considers past attempted solutions and then looks to future potential resolutions. In

his discussion of past attempts, Pei looks at Esperanto, which he calls "probably the most famous and successful of all constructed languages" (1958: 161). At the time of Pei's writing, Esperanto was permitted to be "used internationally in telegrams, along with Latin," and, "in Gallup polls conducted in minor European countries, Esperanto [turned] out to be the second choice for an international tongue, with English as the first choice" (1958: 163). Pei mentions those who criticize Esperanto for not being sufficiently universal, especially because of an excess of Germanic roots that do not correlate to any other languages, but Pei also comments on its strengths. By "adopting roots from different sources to distinguish between meanings of what is, even in natural languages, the same word: *piedo*, for instance, is 'foot' as a part of the body, but *futo* is 'foot' as a measure," Esperanto "shows the beginnings of a system that may prove to be the solution of its own troubles" (Pei 1958: 164). Pei does not directly state it, but this is a clear reference to those in centuries past who sought a logical language, free of the confusion of homonyms and the like.

Daniele Archibugi also addresses political issues relevant to linguistic diversity in a 2005 article titled: *The Language of Democracy: Vernacular or Esperanto? A Comparison between the Multiculturalist and Cosmopolitan Perspectives*. He takes on Will Kymlicka's assertion that "democratic politics is politics in the vernacular," and the complications that arise from this premise within multilingual communities. While his approach is more analytical than persuasive, Archibugi echoes some of Pei's points regarding the reasons some kind of overarching shared language would be beneficial.

> The resurgence of the language problem in our era is the result of two
> fundamental contemporary historical processes. The first has to do with the

increased interdependence between distinct communities… State political communities have become increasingly permeable to trade flows, migrations, mixed marriages, and tourism. The second phenomenon has to do with the increased importance of individual rights, which has emerged both in a broadening of rights in democratic states and in an increase in the number of states in which democracy is in force (Archibugi 2005: 539).

He also provides specific figures indicating the problem – or at the very least, the strain – caused by linguistic diversity. "Of the nearly 5,000 employees of the European Parliament, 340 are translators and 238 are interpreters," and as more countries vie for membership, this number could as much as double (Archibugi 2005: 551). Furthermore:

> As official languages have increased, so the translation procedure has grown more complex: there are currently 20 x 19 = 380 possible language communications ('into' and 'from'), and finding interpreters capable of translating, for example, from Portuguese to Slovak or Lithuanian to Maltese and vice versa is often impossible, hence the recourse to 'double translations' (2005: 551).

Like many who address approaches to cross-linguistic communication, Archibugi touches on the relevance of Esperanto. However, Archibugi views it as a noble but failed attempt, not really a feasible option for the future. He concludes his paper with, "rather than to choose today between the vernacular and Esperanto, it might be more useful to support investment in education to allow individuals to improve their language skills" (Archibugi 2005: 553). Pei, in contrast, ends his book with instructions to the reader on how to move forward, closing emphatically with, "wherever you are, if you believe in one language for the world, let your government, the UN, and UNESCO know it!" (1958: 251). Both agree that linguistic diversity makes life, international relations, intranational understanding, and political representation difficult, and is an issue that needs to be addressed.

1.3 A brief history of language invention

Others also found problems with the state of world languages, and they took it into their own hands to invent a language that would address the issues perceived. For some, like John Wilkins, taking after George Dalgarno (Okrent 2009: 45-50), the problem with language was its vagueness. For others, like Ludwik Zamenhof, the problem was that languages were not culturally transcendent. It may be asked, were these men linguists? Scholars? Most language inventors were educated, but they were philosophers, nuns, feminists, mathematicians, and everything in between (Okrent 2009). Zamenhof was an optometrist with a good education and a big dream. What connects all of these people was the seed of an idea that inevitably sprouts roots potent enough to consume whoever begins to water it.

The annals of history reveal that the impetus to invent languages has been around nearly as long as human language itself, though the motivations vary and overlap. In her popular history, *In the Land of Invented Languages*, Arika Okrent explores the histories of select languages from five hundred languages created over nine hundred years, presumably five hundred among many more whose documentation disappeared over the centuries. She describes the urge to invent and redesign as, "at least as old and persistent as the urge to complain about language" (Okrent 2009: 11). Several language inventors cited the noble cause of fixing the problems with current language. Language is vague, ambiguous, redundant, full of exceptions, and still leaves us unable to find the words we want. In short, language is inefficient. Philosophers yearned for a perfect, unambiguous, logical language that

would unfetter the mind from the effects of imperfect language, freeing humans to ponder the mysteries of existence at a higher level. This impetus to systematize language is not as unfounded as it may seem. Up until the seventeenth century, mathematicians represented relationships in a haze of words. The Pythagorean Theorem, for example, was rendered by Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty in the mid 1600s as:

> The multiplying of the middle termes [sic] (which is nothing else but the squaring of the comprehending sides of the prime rectangular) affords two products, equall [sic] to the oblongs made of the great subtendent, and his respective segments, the aggregate whereof, by equation, is the same with the square of the chief subtendent, or hypotenusa (qtd in Okrent 2009: 31).

When this muddle was replaced with symbols and operators and equations, relationships revealed themselves, and comparisons became much more possible. Best of all, the new system was independent from spoken language and therefore universally understandable. With such clarity and simplicity came innovation and rapid progress; calculus and physics were developed. So, if a systematization of mathematics could clear the haze and reveal so much that had been obscured by the murk of words, it stood to reason that a systematization of language would yield similarly profound results.

After working with scholar and language inventor George Dalgarno and having his suggestions turned down, John Wilkins of London spent over a decade working on his own attempt at one such pure language. He named it simply, Philosophical Language, and described it as being "free from the ambiguity and imprecision that afflicted natural languages. It would directly represent concepts; it would reveal the truth" (Okrent 2009: 24). He intended to catalogue the universe, to

reduce everything to its essence under an elaborate system of classification. He had

an expansive tree, an Aristotelian hierarchy, that branched out into forty categories,

each with its own subsequent tree. Concepts were organized by meaning, from

general to specific. To get to 'Beasts', the node number twenty-eight of the forty, one

would have to correctly navigate down the tree as follows: Special (not general) >

creature (not Creator) > distributively (not collectively) > substances (not accident) >

animate (not inanimate) > species (not parts) > sensitive (not vegetative) >

sanguineous (not Exsanguineous) > Beasts. Clearly, Wilkins' system was not

particularly simple, albeit perhaps remarkably comprehensive, nor was it as intuitive

as he hoped.

> Entertaining was a bodily action, but shitting was a motion – so was playing dice. While things as different as irony and semicolon were grouped together (under discourse > elements), things as similar as milk and butter were placed miles apart (milk with the other bodily fluids in "Parts, General," and butter with the other foodstuffs in "Provisions") (Okrent 2009: 58).

One thing was to find the location of a concept in the tree, but still another was to find

the desired meaning of one word with many concepts. Wilkins provided an index for

English words, but the word 'clear' had twenty-five options. "Do you mean 'not

mingled with another'? Then see 'simple.' Do you mean 'visible'? Then see 'right,'

'transparent,' or 'unspotted.' Do you mean 'as refers to men'? Then see 'candid'…"

(Okrent 2009: 60), and on and on. Wilkins' language required absolute certainty of

intended meaning and eradicated redundancy by grouping synonyms together at the

tree's endpoints. Then, the endpoints were denoted by a 'word' constructed from

information indicating the location of the word within the tree. However, one version

of 'clear' expanded to the meaning of its concept, transforms it into "a transcendental

relation of action belonging to single things pertaining to the knowledge of things, as regards the causing to be known, being the opposite of seeming" (Okrent 2009: 64). Even with the benefit of exactitude in intended expression, to construct a sentence with its fully expanded true meaning yields an incomprehensible quagmire, nothing near the clarifying simplicity yielded in mathematical systematization. Though it initially gained favor with the king and was slated to be translated into Latin, Wilkins' oeuvre, like so many before it, fell into obscurity, never attaining the intellectually revolutionizing effects of which Wilkins dreamt.

Wilkins was an exception in his time, not because of his linguistic endeavors, but because of their profundity. In the age of reason, it seemed as though every gentleman had his own sketch of a constructed language, if only because it was in vogue and good for the ego. This gentlemanly dabbling, however, rarely resulted in much more than a flighty lexicon at best. Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty described his language, Logopandecteision, whose name literally means "gold out of dung," as "a most exquisite jewel, more precious than a diamond inchased in gold, the like whereof was never seen in any age," but he had more praise for what his language was allegedly capable of than details about how exactly it would do it (Okrent 2009: 27-28). In regards to this array of efforts, Mario Pei asserts:

> The main contribution of the seventeenth century to the solution of the international language question is fundamentally that it called attention to the problem and established a principle which the interlinguists of future centuries would make use of, the principle of departing from the illogicity of the natural languages (1958: 90-91).

It may be more appropriate to assert that the play in logical language construction bore negligible fruit, except that it suggested a possible path for future peoples

frustrated by the absence of a global language. They could look beyond the implementation of a natural language, and explore constructed languages with systematized regularity, as was the case with Esperanto, a planned language that found considerable success within the limited scope of success enjoyed by planned languages at large, which I will later discuss.

Other creative minds in more recent years have produced fictional languages to more fully develop fantasy worlds. J. R. R. Tolkien, though known for his book series, *The Lord of the Rings*, purportedly created his expansive mythology to create a world for his languages, and not the other way around (Okrent 2009: 283). He said, "nobody believes me when I say that my long book is an attempt to create a world in which a form of language agreeable to my personal aesthetic might seem real. But it is true" (Okrent 2009: 283). Whatever the motivation for people to undergo the remarkable task of developing a constructed language – ostensibly a much more involved task than perceived when the inventors began, few to no languages can be said to have found the popularity their creators hoped. A handful of these languages have found a sustained following or had a brief period of popularity. Klingon and Na'avi, two languages created for Hollywood characters, have yielded an invested population that often urges the creator to take the language far beyond his original intent or expectation, forming groups on the Internet that dissect language samples to codify the grammar and phonology. However, these languages represent an anomalous rationale and outcome.

The Internet now serves as a network for the modern equivalent of seventeenth-century gentleman dabblers. Okrent describes the growing number of

online forums for 'artlang'[4] or 'conlang'[5]. Here, language enthusiasts can get

feedback on their creations. As always, the impetus behind conlanging comes in

many forms:

> Toki Pona, a language of simple syllables that uses only positive words, is
> intended to promote positive thinking; … Brithenig was designed as "the
> language of an alternate history, being the Romance language that might have
> evolved if Latin speakers had displaced Celtic speakers in Britain. … The
> urge to push features to their limits is also found in languages like Aeo, which
> uses only vowels, and (the self-describing) AllNoun (Okrent 2009: 288).

The contemporary inventors Okrent describes seem to have mostly self-indulgent

motivations, not seeking to right some linguistic wrong or create something practical.

They want to play with language, and test the limits of what constitutes a language.

Whether they be inspired by a 'what if' world or the idiosyncrasies found in natural

languages, the languages that populate these forums indicate that perhaps a lesson has

been learned from the slew of failed historic attempts to resolve world problems via

language invention.

1.4 A brief history of Esperanto

In the midst of this history of language invention, peppered with failure and

salted with personal interest, Esperanto emerged. In 1887, under the name of Dr.

Esperanto, Ludwik Zamenhof published the guide to his language, now known as

Esperanto, but its origins were much earlier. Ludwik Zamenhof began inventing his

language as a teen in culturally and linguistically divided Bialystok, now in Poland,

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[4] Art language
[5] Constructed language

where Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews, and others coexisted in space but not in spirit.

He wrote in his journal:

> In that city, more than anywhere, a sensitive person might feel the heavy sadness of the diversity of languages and become convinced at every step that it is the only, or at least primary force which divides the human family into enemy parts. … I was taught that all men were brothers, while at the same time everything I saw in the street made me feel that men as such did not exist: only Russians, Poles, Germans, Jews and so forth. … I kept telling myself that when I was grown up I would certainly destroy this evil (qtd in Okrent 2009: 94, 95).

Home life taught him Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew; Polish and perhaps Lithuanian he learned on the street; Latin, Greek, French, and German, he learned in school. However, this multilingualism served as a further reminder of division that surrounded him. He wrote:

> No one can feel the misery of barriers among people as strongly as a ghetto Jew. No one can feel the need for a language free of a sense of nationality as strongly as the Jew who is obliged to pray to God in a language long dead, receives his upbringing and education in the language of a people that rejects him, and has fellow-sufferers throughout the world with whom he cannot communicate (qtd in Janton 1993: 24).

Of the myriad language inventors before him, Zamenhof's experiences may be said to have given him the noblest intentions and the most profound connection to the cause of universal language.

> He was not an ivory-tower linguist, out of touch with the concrete problems arising from, and expressed by, language differences… he saw the creation of an international language as simply a first step toward a more general goal of peace… directed at all those who suffered or were oppressed by language discrimination (Janton 1993: 25).

Consequently, the nobility of his intentions went beyond the creation of a language. In his conception, the practice of Esperanto was to be bound to an ideology of respect, one that would cultivate the fraternity Zamenhof aspired to inspire between

all humankind. Zamenhof realized that conflict was not just about language; it stemmed from religion, class, and capital. It stemmed from power. This was part of why he felt that his language was better suited to being a language of the world than some other natural language. The difficulty of natural languages is such that only those with leisure and financial resource can take up the task of learning one, resulting only in "an international language for the higher social classes", not really a universal language at all (Zamenhof, qtd in Janton 1993:29). Instead, with Esperanto, "everyone, not just the intelligent and the rich, but all spheres of human society, even the poorest and least educated of villagers, would be able to master it within a few months" (qtd in Janton 1993: 29). But Zamenhof's aspirations went beyond universal linguistic understanding. He wrote to Alfred Michaux:

> My work for Esperanto is only part of this idea. I never stop thinking and dreaming of the other part, … This plan (which I call "Hillelism") involves the creation of a moral bridge by which to unify in brotherhood all peoples and religions, without creating any newly formulated dogmas and without the need for any people to throw out their traditional religions. My plan involves creating the kind of religious union that would gather together all existing religions in peace and into peace (qtd in Janton 1993: 31).

Again, as with the intended paradigm for the use of Esperanto, he focuses not on replacing existing beliefs, but on creating a common ground. Though Hillelism, which was later renamed homaranismo, was sometimes called a religion, it was more about generating "a 'neutrally human' doctrine … toward the common aspirations of all people. It sought to put the concept of humanity above those of nation, ethnic group, race, class, and religion" (Janton 1993: 32). Zamenhof described it as a means of "communicating with people of all languages and religions on a basis that is neutrally human, on principles of common brotherhood, equality and justice" (qtd in

Janton 1993: 31). Still, this second column of Esperantism, which could in fact be the central one, as the ideologies that it puts forth are the ideologies that led to the creation of the language, were often downplayed so as not to make Esperanto the language too political or controversial. "His ideals, particularly his views on religious ecumenism, were at odds with many of the more practical and down-to-earth bourgeois commercial types who adopted his language" (Tonkin 2008: 4), and so Esperanto was presented as a practical tool with "an optional yet fundamental philosophy" (Janton 1993: 35). Still, Zamenhof knew that those who expressed passionate commitment found their passion in the ideals of it, not in the practicality of it (Janton 1993: 35).

1.5 The construction, structure, and dissemination of Esperanto

Unlike other language inventors, who clung to the rules of their language, Zamenhof released his sixteen rules of grammar and welcomed innovation within the framework. He did not seek to micromanage others' attempts to combine his roots to produce more words and expand his original lexicon. After 1889, by which point Zamenhof had published two books on Esperanto as well as a supplementary third publication, "from [that] point on, he considered the language not as his own property but as belonging to everyone. Its development would depend on all friends of the 'sacred idea'" (Janton 1993: 27). Moreover, "he submitted proposals for reform to the Esperantists, accepted their verdict, and always regarded himself a simple user of Esperanto among all the others" (Janton 1993: 30).

He freely submitted the language to the criticism of his correspondents and to the readers of *La Esperantisto*, the earliest Esperanto magazine. … its articles examined various modifications and reforms in the language, some of which – including the suppression of certain consonants, abandonment of the accusative ending and adjectival agreement, and modification of certain suffixes – show that Zamenhof was willing to depart radically from his original conception (1993: 41, 42).

Still, Zamenhof wanted to protect his language from arbitrary change, and a language whose grammar was under constant revision would prove difficult to learn. Indeed, the failure of Volapük[6], a similar language movement that preceded Esperanto by eight years, demonstrated the perils of incessant revision (Janton 1993: 42 and Jordan 1997: 41). The downfall of Volapük redirected enthusiasts to Esperanto, and these new members boosted its numbers but brought with them their zeal for language revision. In 1894, the defected Volapükists contributed to a rising pressure for reform of Esperanto, but when Zamenhof submitted a list of proposed reforms to be voted on by readers of *La Esperantisto*, the majority of the votes opposed the reforms (Jordan 1997: 42, 43). The first international Esperanto congress in 1905 designated Zamenhof's publication, the *Fundamento de Esperanto*, "which perpetuated the language in its 1887 form," as the official model of the language (Jordan 1997: 43 and Janton 1993: 42). Henceforth, the language's rules were to be held constant.

Here, I will reproduce the famous 'Sixteen Rules' of Esperanto, as presented in Pierre Janton's *Esperanto: Language, Literature, and Community*[7]:

1. There is no indefinite, and only one definite article, *la*, for all genders, numbers, and cases.
2. Nouns are formed by adding *–o* to the root. For the plural, *-j* must be added to the singular. There are two cases: the nominative and the

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[6] For more on the history of Volapük, see Bernard Golden's "Conservation of the Heritage of Volapük."

[7] For an analysis of Esperanto linguistics see Janton's Chapter 3: "The Language".

objective (accusative). The root with the added –*o* is the nominative, the objective adds an –*n* after the –*o*. Other cases are formed by prepositions.

3. Adjectives are formed by adding –*a* to the root. The numbers and cases are the same as in nouns. The comparative degree is formed by prefixing *pli* 'more'; the superlative by *plej* 'most'. 'Than' is rendered by *ol*.

4. The cardinal numerals do not change their forms for the different cases. They are: *unu, du, tri, kvar, kvin, ses, sep, ok, naŭ, dek, cent, mil*. The tens and hundreds are formed by simple junction of the numerals. Ordinals are formed by adding the adjectival –*a* to the cardinals. Multiplicatives add the suffix –*obl*; fractionals add the suffix –*on*; collective numerals add –*op*; for distributives the word *po* is used. The numerals can also be used as nouns or adverbs, with the appropriate endings.

5. The personal pronouns are: *mi, vi, li, ŝi, ĝi* (for inanimate objects and animals), *si* (reflexive), *ni, vi, ili, oni* (indefinite). Possessive pronouns are formed by suffixing the adjectival termination. The declension of the pronouns is identical with that of the nouns.

6. The verb does not change its form for numbers or persons. The present tense ends in –*as*, the past in –*is*, the future in –*os*, the conditional in –*us*, the imperative in –*u*, the infinitive in –*i*. Active participles, both adjectival and adverbial are formed by adding, in the present, -*ant*-, in the past -*int*-, and in the future -*ont*-. The passive forms are, respectively, -*at*-, -*it*-, and –*ot*-. All forms of the passive are rendered by the respective forms of the verb *esti* (to be) and the passive participle of the required verb. The preposition used is *de*.

7. Adverbs are formed by adding –*e* to the root. The degrees of comparison are the same as in adjectives.

8. All prepositions take the nominative case.

9. Every word is to be read exactly as written.

10. The accent falls on the penultimate syllable.

11. Compound words are formed by the simple junction of roots (the principal word standing last). Grammatical terminations are regarded as independent words.

12. If there is one negative in a clause, a second is not admissible.

13. To show direction, words take the termination of the objective case.

14. Every preposition has a definite fixed meaning, but if it is necessary to use a preposition, and it is not quite evident from the sense, which it should be, the word *je* is used, which has no definite meaning. Instead of *je*, the objective without a preposition may be used.

15. The so-called foreign words (words that the greater number of languages have derived from the same source) undergo no change in the international language, beyond conforming to its system of orthography.

16. The final vowel of the noun and the article may be dropped and replaced with an apostrophe.

In his paper, "Variation on Esperanto," Bruce Arne Sherwood looks at the

morphology of Esperanto. Aside from grammatical endings, such as those denoting

part of speech or tense, almost all other morphemes are free. This makes Esperanto

highly productive. Take, for example, *kato* 'cat' and *katido* 'kitten', and *hundo* 'dog'

and *hundido* 'puppy'. *Ido* is not –*ido*; it can stand alone, and its meaning is

'offspring'. Sherwood also explores the rather undefined field of proper Esperanto

pronunciation. "Good pronunciation also reflects the phonological character of

Esperanto, distinguishing among all the phonemes, minimizing allophony, and

conserving the strict relation between pronunciation and orthography" (Sherwood

1982: 7). In another sense, "good pronunciation is geographically neutral, not

manifesting regional or national peculiarities and making it difficult to identify the

speaker's nationality" (Sherwood 1982: 7). Sherwood indicates that mild national

accents are acceptable or even sometimes enjoyed so long as the accent does not

obstruct meaning, "but it appears that speakers do recognize and prize an

international or nonnational pronunciation style" (1982: 7). Sherwood lauds the five-

vowel sound system of Esperanto for minimizing the effect of national accent:

> Intelligibility for such a sound system is more resistant to destruction by
> national accents than is, say, English as spoken by foreigners. For example, a
> slight error in vowel height in English can change "beat" to "bit", whereas
> such an error in Esperanto must be much larger before *timo* 'fear' is confused
> with *temo* 'theme' (Sherwood 1982: 5).

With this vowel system, international Esperanto communication is insulated from

confusion that might be caused by accent interference.

Beyond disseminating the set of rules, Zamenhof provided writing samples,

which yielded insights into the intended syntax of the language. He supplemented the

rules with six "specimens of international language": the Lord's Prayer; a portion of the Book of Genesis; a letter in Esperanto; two original poems, *Mia penso* (My thought) and *Ho, mia kor'* (Oh, my heart), and a translation of Heine's poem, *Mir träumte von einem Königskind*, which became *En sonĝo princinon mi vidis* (Tonkin 2008: 3). In addition to the *Fundamento* and these original supplements, Zamenhof translated a large body of preexisting literature to "refin[e] Esperanto by tackling the difficulties and subtleties of natural languages" (Janton 1993: 92). Zamenhof began with *Hamlet* in 1894, and gradually processed several European linguistically diverse masterworks, as well as the complete Old Testament (Janton 1993: 92). Through these translation projects, Zamenhof drastically expanded the original lexicon, but according to Humphrey Tonkin, he also injected Esperanto with cultural legitimacy and tradition: "the existence of literary works in a language is a guarantee that it has a life of its own, and that it is connected to the cultural past: it declares that Esperanto is not a code, but rather a work of art grounded in earlier works of art" (2008: 4). The choice to translate the daunting and monolithic *Hamlet* was particularly significant:

> The late nineteenth-century Hamlet of Central and Eastern Europe was no indecisive weakling, but the very epitome of the seeker after truth. … Examine the independence movements of Central Europe and *Hamlet* is never very far away. Thus Zamenhof begins his linguistic movement – … with a revolutionary statement, a statement that at one blow might silence those who suggest that his language has no life. … It was a brilliant move: it gave the early Esperantists a sense of cultural dignity, and above all it linked them with the elite cultures of Europe (Tonkin 2008: 6).

Zamenhof translated several other dramas, and Tonkin asserts that this efficiently generated a written model of the language, as well as a model of natural speech (2008: 4). Furthermore, it firmly rooted Esperantists in a tradition of literature, be it translated or original, and provided "opportunities for linguistic experiment, and a

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sense of cultural solidarity" (Tonkin 2008: 9). Indeed, by 1993, it was estimated that 10,000 works had been translated into Esperanto (Janton 1993: 93). Now, according to the President of the Quebec Esperanto Society, "there [are] 50,000 books in Esperanto and CDs from classical music to rap" (Normand). But the contemporary strength of Esperanto is proven by more than its prolific literary production[8]. Because it has now been in existence for over 100 years, there have been several generations of Esperantists. People have met through Esperanto, fallen in love, had Esperanto as their only common language, and consequently raised their children to speak Esperanto. A 1968 study located 150 families where Esperanto was the language of the home, and this information, coupled with Esperanto marriage notices in Esperanto periodicals, lead Bruce Sherwood to estimate the existence of between one thousand and two thousand native speakers[9] of Esperanto in 1982 (1982: 2). Esperanto has started to become a natural language.

Needless to say, Esperanto has not attained the level of use that Zamenhof envisioned. Still, the language – albeit among a relatively small community of speakers and enthusiasts – has carved a place for itself in modern society. The international library in Parma, Italy, houses Esperanto periodicals among its collection of international literature. Facebook, a popular social networking website, offers an Esperanto option among language settings. Wikipedia, a popular Internet encyclopedia, can be read in Esperanto. Because Wikipedia is based entirely on user contribution, this means that all of Wikipedia's Esperanto content has been generated

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[8] For more on the history of Esperanto literature, see Jukka Pietiläinen's "Current trends in literary production in Esperanto"
[9] For more on Esperanto as a natural language, see Jouko Lindstedt's study, "Native Esperanto as a Test Case for Natural Language".

by Esperantists who wish to have the option to spread and receive information in Esperanto, rather than in their native language, and felt so motivated that they took the time to translate or produce the content themselves. Ubuntu, a computer operating system, can be installed in Esperanto. Similarly to the Wikipedia case, for Ubuntu to be available in Esperanto, someone had to take the time to generate an additional Esperanto interface. Interesting to note is that Ubuntu is named after a Southern African ethical ideology, and the principle roughly translates as "humanity towards others" or "the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity" (About the Name). This ideological overlap may be coincidence, or it may point to why Ubuntu programmers created an Esperanto interface.

Just like contemporary constructed languages, Esperanto has taken advantage of the Internet to create forums, disseminate information, and recruit new enthusiasts. Mark Fettes, in "Interlinguistics and the Internet", describes how, originally, the spread of languages like Esperanto and Volapük was made possible by "the development of efficient postal and transportation systems in 19th-century Europe" (1997: 1). Now, however, with the Internet, "rapid, low-cost, many-to-many communication across political and geographical boundaries," is possible, which augments the spread of constructed languages (Fettes 1997: 1). Furthermore, it "lowers, though it does not remove, one of the greatest barriers to research into Esperanto: its invisibility to the uncommitted" (Fettes 1997: 2), and, ostensibly, makes it easier for the curious to access resources that might draw them in.

1.6 Esperanto and the culture question

Aside from the linguistic criticism Esperanto faced in its earlier years, and the offshoot language projects organized by disgruntled dissenters[10], Esperanto's relationship to culture has been a point of contention. Esperanto is intended to be culturally neutral, but some critics claim that it is not neutral enough. "Seventy-five percent of the lexemes in Esperanto come from Romance languages, primarily Latin and French; 20 percent come from Germanic languages; the rest include borrowings from Greek (mostly scientific words), Slavic languages, and, in small numbers, Hebrew, Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, and other languages" (Janton 1993: 51). Furthermore, because the lexicon of Esperanto continues to grow, there is dispute about whether it is becoming overly Latinized (Sherwood 1982: 3, 4). Still, "the continued strength of the Esperanto movement in Asia is likely to ensure that the needs of non-European speakers will not be neglected" (Sherwood 1982: 4). Bruce Sherwood calls the fact of this European lexical base "one of the few truly well-founded criticisms of Esperanto" (1982: 4). Because its linguistic foundation is so heavily European as opposed to global, linguistic determinists argue that Esperanto is necessarily embedded with European cultural values. Esperanto has tense transformations absent in many Asian languages; its sound inventory contains sounds foreign to Asian languages, and its phonology allows for consonant clusters disallowed in Asian and other languages, so some assert that Esperanto is less linguistically egalitarian than it claims. These are certainly additional hurdles for an Asian would-be speaker of Esperanto, such as the l-r distinction that is difficult for native speakers of Japanese (Sherwood 1982: 6), but these are not necessarily

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[10] See David Jordan's section, "Id and Ido" and Okrent pages: 109, 116, 143, 144, for more on related projects

prohibitive difficulties. Sherwood suggests that Asian Esperantists may not have as much difficulty as might be expected because, "almost all Japanese study English before they study Esperanto, and this may be the case with some Chinese Esperantists, too, with the result that their use of Esperanto may be colored by English (and the Latin vocabulary of English)" (Sherwood 1982: 4). In the present context, "the large number of Latin roots … is more of an advantage than a disadvantage if we bear in mind that English, so far the most universal of the national languages, draws over half its words from the Romance languages" (Janton 1993: 51). At the very least, to learn Esperanto is like learning any natural language, but with a broader scope of utility.

While Esperanto is attacked for being insufficiently neutral, others assume that an artificial language cannot have a real culture, and consequently believe that Esperanto lacks some intrinsic value held by natural languages. Arthur Aughey cites Michael Oakeshott, who calls Esperanto "one of those rationalist projects with which the history of modern Europe is littered" (1992: 9). The problem with this "joke", Esperanto, is: "language is not just communication of the utilitarian kind, but the expression of the identity and the cultural unity of a people. Language is not about calculations of convenience, but is the expression of something akin to the 'national soul'" (Aughey 1992: 9). Esperanto is a product, and its practicality is not enough of a draw to compensate for the devaluing effects of being seen as existing in a cultural vacuum.

But, given the common belief that language and culture are almost symbiotic, is it really possible for Esperanto to be cultureless? Esperanto cites cultural neutrality

as part of its appeal to the masses, and while this is not to be confused with culturelessness, if the term culture is ambiguous, cultural neutrality is more so. When Zamenhof set out to create his language, one of hope for the world, he had a rigorous ideology of brotherhood and peace – albeit one he consented to make 'optional' for his followers – embedded in it. If Esperanto's cultural neutrality were to manifest by equally representing or including all cultures, favoring none above another, this would align with its theme of equality. Cultural neutrality might also intend to refer to not adopting a particular nation-specific culture but, from this interpretation, Esperanto is still criticized for linguistically favoring European languages and therefore propagating European ideologies, absorbing cultural elements via linguistic styling.

Esperanto speakers themselves firmly contend that Esperanto has a culture. *Lernu!*, "a multilingual website which aims to inform Internet users about Esperanto and help them to learn it, easily and free of charge," has a page dedicated to the culture of Esperanto (About Esperanto). Tonkin describes the early construction of Esperanto culture via literary translation and production. Arika Okrent describes the "distinctly Victorian flavor" of the ceremonies that take place even in contemporary Esperanto congresses (2009: 117). She puts forth the equation, "forced tradition + time = real tradition," and argues that part of the reason Esperanto succeeded where other, very similar, projects failed, was because of this cultural injection: "people who may not have been inspired to learn a language in order to *use* it for something would learn a language in order to *participate* in something" (Okrent 2009: 117). Oakeshott may have seen Esperanto as a utilitarian artifice, but many others claim that it has

developed its own culture, and consider this part of why Esperanto found relative success:

> Although many Esperantists tried, even while Zamenhof was still alive, to eliminate from Esperanto any hint of ideology, the very name of the language encapsulated idealistic aspirations and served to inspire enthusiasm in generation after generation. We can certainly look at Esperanto from a purely linguistic point of view, but no purely linguistic examination of the phenomenon can explain its uniquely powerful attraction, its energizing powers, and its rich diversity (Janton 1993: 27).

Esperanto's cultural foundation was painstakingly laid by Zamenhof's writings and translations. From this deliberately formed foundation, over a century of speakers and dreamers has laid down bricks, building a rich, cohesive culture.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis asserts that an individual's language influences the structure of thoughts and, consequently, the perception of and interaction with the world. Though the strength of this correlation is widely contested, it would not be unreasonable to say that the learned culture linked to a language – not the structure of the language – could impact a speaker's interaction with the world. As members of a speech community, Esperanto speakers have a particular, internal set of norms of use for their shared language, but the effect of their language ideology is also relevant to their interactions beyond the speech community.

Membership in the Esperanto community is officially defined in accordance with the decisions made in the Bolougne Declaration, but to know the grammar of a language is not the same as cultural competency, or functionality within the speech community. Today, we know who the speech community was supposed to be: everyone. We know what the speech community's ideology was supposed to be: universal brotherhood and equality. Histories of the development of Esperanto

abound. There have been several studies concerning the grammar of Esperanto and the development of Esperanto as a natural language. But, relatively few studies have been made regarding the Esperanto speech community at large, now, over a century after its inception[11]. We know the dream and we know the beginnings, but we want to know today's reality.

So, the questions I will address are:

1) Who comprises the Esperanto speech community?

2) What are the norms adhered to and ideologies held by members of the speech community?

3) Why are people members of the speech community?

4) What are the objectives of the speech community?

The existence of a speech community can be hard to establish, but an observable trait of a speech community is a shared language ideology: the social and political values embedded in the language. Consequently, analysis will focus on shared norms and ideologies as evidence of the Esperanto speech community.

1.7 Research Methods

To conduct this study, I solicited participants through a personal contact involved in the Esperanto community, who distributed my request for participants through an Esperanto electronic mailing list. Those interested then contacted me and

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[11] Among notable recent studies, *La rondo familia. Sociologiaj esploroj en Esperantio* was conducted by Nikola Rašic's over the course of sixty years, and completed in 1994. While this study was published in Esperanto, it has been written about and cited in subsequent English-language articles and studies. Another recent study is "Standardization and self-regulation in an international speech community: the case of Esperanto" by Sabine Fiedler, published in 2006. For more, see the section, "the Esperanto movement and speech community," in Humphrey Tonkin's article, "Recent Studies in Esperanto and Interlinguistics: 2006," published in *Language Problems & Language Planning* in 2007.

in some cases passed on my solicitation to their own contacts within the community.

Ultimately, this resulted in thirteen participants (organized by chronology of

interviews):

Chart 1.1: Participants			
Participant	Age	Location	Country of Esperanto Acquisition, if different from current location
Randy	41	Atlanta, Georgia, USA	
Normand	54	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	France
Jim	37	Atlanta, Georgia, USA	
Zdravka	58	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	Croatia
Joshua	29	Oakland, California, USA	
Helm	73	Uppsala, Sweden	
stevo	55	Cincinnati, Ohio, USA	
Jorge/Kior	55	Recife, Brazil	
Jerry	68	Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA	
Tatyana	53	Ukraine	
Will	25	Madison, Wisconsin, USA	
Joel	32	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	USA
Yevgeniya	32	Montreal, Quebec, Canada	Ukraine

Jorge was interviewed via textual chat using Google Chat. stevo preferred to answer

questions in written form, via email. All other interviews were conducted via

telephone or Skype and lasted from thirty minutes to an hour. All calls were recorded

for audio and later transcribed. Participants were offered $10 USD in compensation,

though some declined or requested that I make a donation to an Esperanto

organization instead.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, with a flexible set of

questions and a few demographic questions. Questions asked included:

1. Have you read the participant consent form and do you agree to participate?

2. What name or pseudonym may I use as your name in my Thesis?

3. Please tell me the story behind you and Esperanto. When did you develop an interest in it? How did you find out about it? How old were you? How old are you now? How long have you been speaking/studying it? Have you ever been more or less active than you are now?

4. What made you interested in Esperanto?

5. What do you know about the history of Esperanto or its creator? Did this knowledge play a part in your interest in Esperanto, or did you learn about this after becoming interested/active?

6. What method(s) did you use to learn Esperanto?

7. How would you describe your level of proficiency in Esperanto? Are you equally confident speaking, listening, and writing? How comfortable or fluent are you in the language?

8. What is your native language? Do you speak any other languages? What is your level of proficiency in those? How does your study of Esperanto compare to that of any other languages you may have studied?

9. What do you know about any constructed languages other than Esperanto, or derivatives of Esperanto? Have you ever been interested in any of them? Why or why not? Why do you prefer Esperanto? Do you?

10. How often do you use Esperanto? In what contexts? Do you participate in any Esperanto conversation groups or other Esperanto organizations? Do you subscribe to any Esperanto publications or do you read literature in Esperanto?

11. Have you ever been to any Esperanto conventions or gatherings? How many people attended? Have you ever traveled to meet other Esperanto speakers or interacted with Esperantists outside of this group? What was it like?

12. What do you consider a good accent? Do you find a difference in the Esperanto (pronunciation) of people with a different first language? Have you ever had a hard time understanding someone's Esperanto? Was it because of their accent or for some other reason?

13. Sometimes people feel like the language they use affects what they can express or how they express things. Some multilingual people feel like one language can more accurately convey certain thoughts or feelings. Have you experienced any of this with Esperanto?

14. Would you call yourself an Esperantist? What does that mean to you? Do you feel different when you are around other Esperanto speakers?

15. Do you think Esperanto has any flaws? Is there anything (about the community or the language itself) that you dislike or wish were different?

16. I have read that some people are concerned about too many new words being added to Esperanto instead of using pre-existing roots, or that the new roots draw too much from languages like English. Have you noticed this? What are your thoughts? Is this really an issue?

17. How do you think non-Esperantists perceive you given your membership in this group? Positively or negatively? How do people react when they find out you speak Esperanto? Do you have any anecdotes about this? Do you usually tell people, is it something people find out about you organically, or do you avoid revealing this about yourself? Do you think outside perceptions of Esperanto/Esperantists are positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate? How so?

18. Women in Esperanto?

19. Do you have a significant other? Does he/she speak Esperanto? Would you take a partner who does not speak Esperanto? Would you encourage him/her to learn it? Have you ever thought about whether you would teach it to any children you may have?

20. Have you ever been more or less active than you are now? Do you continue to study Esperanto? Do you think you will continue your involvement in the future?

Demographic Questions
1. What level of education have you attained or do you intend to attain?
2. What was your field of study?
3. What is your current occupation?
4. How old are you?
5. What is your city of residence?

As interviews were conducted, new questions arose from certain responses, and these questions were either interview specific (e.g. Tell me more about the language you constructed.) or incorporated into the body of questions for future interviews (e.g. How many people were at the congresses you attended?). Most participants permitted

me to use their full name or their first name; three elected a pseudonym. For consistency, I use only their first names or pseudonyms here.

There were a few difficulties encountered during the process. While this was not a prohibitive difficulty, it was sometimes challenging to arrange a mutually suitable interview time, given that there was often a time difference between my location and the participants', some as great as nine hours. Because I do not speak Esperanto, I was limited to interviewing participants who speak a language that I do speak.[12] One person suggested that I contact a mailing list for Esperanto families, but warned me that a request not in Esperanto would not be well-received. For some participants who were not native English speakers, interview questions were abridged to accommodate their language comfort level. Joel and Yevgeniya were interviewed together, which sometimes yielded interesting exchanges between the two, but sometimes caused the second respondent's reply to be an affirmation of the first, rather than a personal expression.

Overall, participants were very enthusiastic about participating, and expressed curiosity about the outcome of my research. They admitted that they had never given much thought to some of the questions, like how they personally defined the term

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[12] During the interviewing process, I was made hyperaware of the privilege I was born into by having English as my native language. There I was, talking to people about this culturally neutral language that is supposed to bring the world together, using exactly the kind of language of power that the language was invented as a reaction against. Some respondents asked me if I spoke Esperanto, and I would reply that I wanted to but had not yet progressed enough to conduct the interviews in said language. Even without Esperanto, I was able to interview several people from around the world whose first language was not English. I thought about what it would be like if I did not speak English or some other major world language. Although many Esperantists have studied several national languages, I would likely be severely limited in access to respondents until I learned Esperanto myself. I felt particularly guilty, so to speak, when I interviewed Zdravka, the Croatian wife of a French-Canadian Esperantist. While she was very capable of expressing herself in English, she was noticeably uncomfortable in the language. Part of the idea of Esperanto is to put people on equal footing when communicating. No one is speaking his or her native language. Yet, my inability to speak Esperanto required that she use a language that was not her preference, and made it hard for me to communicate my apologetic gratitude for her participation.

"Esperantist," but valued the push to do so. Because of the semi-structured nature of the interviews, participants were encouraged to say whatever they wanted, whether or not it addressed the question being asked. While many apologized for "babbling" or going off on tangents, I often found these moments the most insightful. It was often from these moments that I realized that there were other questions I should consider adding to my original corpus.

Chapter 2:
Who Speaks Esperanto?

"People who get interested in this type of thing, like Esperanto, Ido, or any of the constructed languages, are a little bit crazy."

- Jerry

"Ordinary people don't know much about conlangs; many don't even know they exist. In general, conlangers are considered as dreamers, wackos and the like."

-Jorge

2.1 Number and distribution of speakers

A main problem facing anyone conducting a study of Esperanto is the need to provide a rough count of its speakers. Numbers range from tens of thousands to tens of millions, often depending on whether the researcher is opposing or promoting Esperanto. Renato Corsetti, in 1996, presents estimates ranging between 50,000 and 8 to 15 million (1996: 265). Müller and Benton, writing in 2006, estimate that Esperanto speakers number more than 100,000 (2006: 173). Fiedler, also writing in

2006, cites estimates ranging from 500,000 to 3.5 million (2006: 74). Ulrich Becker

explains the difficulty behind generating an accurate count:

> Most of the speakers of Esperanto are unknown and do not appear in any kind
> of statistics. It is not possible to count people who have studied, say, French,
> unless they become members of a linguistic or cultural francophone society or
> study the language in school. The same is true for Esperanto. One can count
> only members of local, regional, national, and international organizations and
> subscribers to periodicals. … The relatively small number of some ten
> thousand active members of the Esperanto community … does not reflect the
> actually much larger number of people who speak Esperanto, who use it only
> sporadically, and do not appear in any sort of statistics (2006: 272-273).

Becker calls this a "twilight zone in the statistics" (2006: 273). But, researchers are

not the only ones who have trouble finding Esperanto speakers. Despite the networks

that connect active Esperantists to each other, it can be difficult to find a way in[13].

Joel, who studied Esperanto on his own, recalls, "little by little I uncovered that …

there were indeed people who spoke this language … and that there were

organizations and there were conventions." Like an anthill, once the concealing

surface is brushed away, an enormous, bustling community is uncovered. For

speakers, that means sudden access to conversation groups, pen-pals, literature, travel

accommodations, and more. For a researcher, however, that means insight, but still an

incomplete picture.

Because speakers cannot be accurately counted, their distribution can also not

be accurately measured. However, as Becker indicates, membership in Esperanto

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[13] When I began my research, I found a few local listings and thought it would be easy to get in touch
with at least a handful of Esperanto enthusiasts. The contact information I found, however, turned out
to be a dead end. Websites had expired and emails bounced back. Could it be that these Esperanto
groups had fallen apart, or was it that they had just fallen away from publicizing themselves on the
Internet? Either way, I feared I was about to experience what most Esperanto researchers assert:
Esperantists are hard to find. However, networking revealed a sure contact, and after an email to him,
my inbox was suddenly flooded with messages from potential participants, and I no longer worried
whether my entire thesis might collapse in the absence of participants. Within the next few days I was
receiving emails from as far as Canada, Switzerland, and a kibbutz in Israel.

organizations can be used as an indication, though it must be emphasized that

numbers generated that way are in no way comprehensive. In 1985, membership in

the Universal Esperanto Association was 82% European (Fettes 1996: 55). In 2006,

"the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA), the largest international Esperanto

organization, shows that the national associations have a total of some 23,254

members, while the UEA itself has 7,075 individual members in 119 countries"

(Becker 2006: 272). According to Esperanto-USA, in 2008 there were 633 registered

members, with an average of 11.7 members per state (Membership by State):

Chart 2.1.1: Published Esperanto-USA Membership, by State, in 2008			
State	Registered Members	State, continued	Registered Members
Alabama	4	Nebraska	7
Alaska	4	Nevada	6
Arizona	13	New Hampshire	5
Arkansas	7	New Jersey	11
California	111	New Mexico	8
Colorado	12	New York	48
Connecticut	5	North Carolina	15
Delaware	2	North Dakota	0
District of Columbia	2	Ohio	21
Florida	18	Oklahoma	7
Georgia	11	Oregon	14
Hawaii	2	Pennsylvania	14
Idaho	3	Puerto Rico	1
Illinois	16	Rhode Island	1
Indiana	10	South Carolina	3
Iowa	4	South Dakota	1
Kansas	1	Tennessee	8
Kentucky	2	Texas	35
Lousiana	2	Utah	5
Maine	5	Vermont	2
Maryland	22	Virginia	11
Massachusetts	18	Washington	31
Michigan	16	West Virginia	1
Minnesota	11	Wisconsin	16
Mississippi	2	Wyoming	2
Missouri	12	Unknown addresses	24
Montana	2	Other countries	19
		Total	**633**

Research participants primarily reside in the United States: Atlanta, Georgia (2); Oakland, California; Cincinnati, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Madison, Wisconsin. Other participants reside in Montreal, Quebec, Canada (4); Sweden, Brazil, and the Ukraine. Two of the Quebec residents were originally from Croatia

and the Ukraine[14]. Most of the participants have interacted with Esperantists from other countries, either through sustained correspondence, personal travel, travel using Pasporta Servo, or while attending Esperanto conventions. Through these means, participants have interacted with Esperanto speakers from over 25 other countries, including: Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, Mexico, Cuba, Chile, Korea, Vietnam, Hong Kong, China, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nepal, Belgium, Slovenia, Russia, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, the United Kingdom, Poland, Portugal, and France. Almost all participants, when speaking of Esperantists who were foreign with respect to themselves, mentioned interacting with Esperantists from Japan and Brazil. Another indication of the geographic spread of Esperanto speakers comes from the website of Pasporta Servo, a networking service for Esperanto-speaking travelers, which claims 1450 hosts from over 91 countries (Internacional Hospitality Service).

Figure 2.1.1: Lernu! Map of Registered Users ("Map")
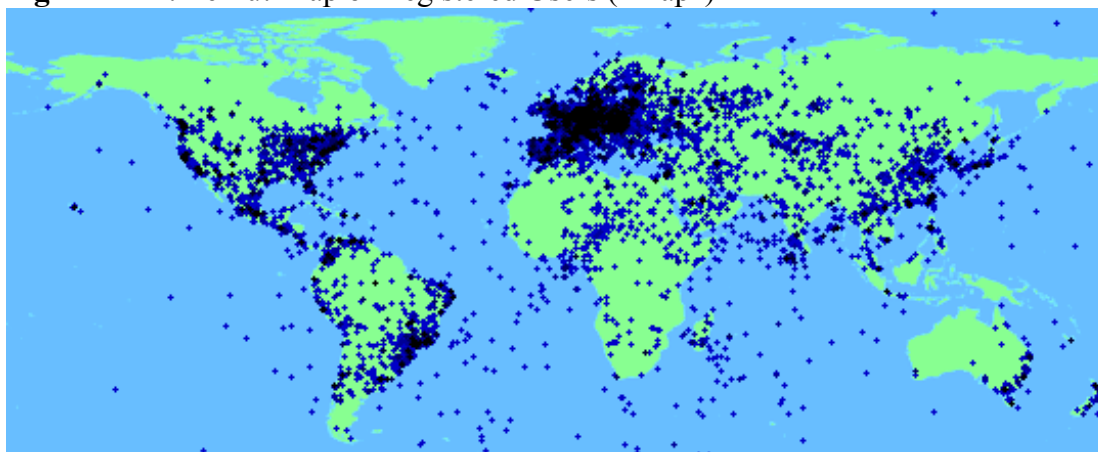
According to Bruce Arne Sherwood, "the highest density of speakers (as a fraction of the total population) is found in East European countries, but West Europe contributes the largest fraction of movement leadership" (1982: 1). It is logical that

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[14] See Chart 1.1

Europe has a particularly high density of Esperanto speakers, both because it is the region where Esperanto originated, and because so many languages are spoken in close proximity to one another. People are more likely to hear about Esperanto, and more likely to see that it has immediate practical value. Still:

> There are significant Esperanto activities in Asia, in Japan, China, South Korea, and Vietnam. Numerically small but active groups of Esperanto speakers are found in the Americas, particularly in Brazil, Canada, and the United States. There are few speakers in Africa or the Middle East, except for Iran and Israel (1982: 1,2).

While Europe might be, in terms of numbers, the locus of Esperanto activity, other regions have notable Esperanto histories, particularly, Asia and Brazil. Because I have nothing new to add to existing literature on this topic, I will not delve deeply into the history of Esperanto in Asia, though, according to Ulrich Lins, "shedding light on it in the East Asian context is particularly interesting because nowhere outside Europe and the Americas has Esperanto been disseminated as much as it has in China, Japan, and Korea" (2008: 47)[15]. Similarly, Mark Fettes points to Esperanto's "long history in Asia," which is "often neglected in discussions of its cultural and social significance" (2007: 15). Esperanto made its first appearance in Japan in 1906, but it the radicalizing political climate of the late 1920s and early 1930s was particularly influential in its development. Left-leaning Esperantists "sought to make use of Esperanto for a world revolution, and Ōshima Yoshio wanted to "justify the Esperanto movement within the framework of Marxist theory"

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[15] For a frame of reference, consider the following: according to a ten-year survey from 1991 to 2000, a Japanese publishing house published the highest number of pages of Esperanto text: 11,047. During the same period, a Chinese publishing house, Ĉina Esperanto-Eldonejo, published the fifth-highest number of titles: 47, but the second-highest number of pages: 9,152. In contrast, the US publishing house with the highest number of Esperanto titles published 30, ranking tenth, and did not rank in the top ten for number of pages (Becker 2006: 286).

(Hiroyuki 2008: 186). From Ōshima's writings, Saitō Hidekazu developed a criticism of linguistic imperialism, criticizing Japan's language policy as a means of oppressing "the working masses and the ethnic groups in the colonies" (Hiroyuki 2008: 187). Then, in the late 1930s, Japanese police started persecuting left-wing Esperantists, and center and right-wing Esperantists stepped forward, proposing Esperanto as a tool to minimize "unnecessary hostilities of ethnic groups under Japanese rule" (Hiroyuki 2008: 187). After World War II, the political environment changed again:

> It became less possible to dream of a world revolution or the "unification" of Asian peoples under Japanese hegemony. … Whereas the prewar movement consisted mainly of intellectuals from the upper and upper-middle classes, the postwar democratization of the society and equitable redistribution of wealth extended its composition to lower economic groups. The rank and file in the postwar movement felt little need for a theoretical grounding for their "beloved language." For most of them, a vague commitment to internationalism and pacifism was enough (Hiroyuki 2008: 187).

In the early 1900s in China, anarchists and reformists viewed Esperanto as a tool that could contribute to China's new place in the world, making it "a pioneer of a world revolution bringing western and eastern cultures together" (Lins 2008: 48, 49). However, in 1928, after the Kuomintang came to power and "began to deal more harshly with anarchists," Esperanto shifted from being "a device for obtaining western knowledge" to a means for spreading China's propaganda to the West (Lins 2008: 48). Ultimately, "the welfare of Chinese Esperantism was always tied to political factors, whether the Esperantists wanted it or not," and "Esperanto is back where it started, dependent on the idealism of individuals" (Müller and Benton 2006: 184).

In "Esperanto, an Asian Language?" Mark Fettes examines Esperanto in Asia, and its potential future there. "Every year for the past quarter-century, the so-called

Komuna Seminario has brought together young people from Japan, South Korea, and more recently China, to explore their similarities and differences" (Fettes 2007: 14). Participants are self-motivated, not compelled, invited, or organized by any governmental or institutional force. They convene not merely to speak Esperanto, the language they choose to share, but to share their perspectives on important cross-national issues. Fettes quotes Kitagawa Hisasi, a participant in the first Seminario who, at the conclusion of the meeting and discussion, "felt that the young Koreans whom [he] met in the Seminario were all brothers and sisters in our human family, with whom [he] would willingly remain friends" (Fettes 2007: 16). Rather than being used in formal settings, Esperanto in modern Asia is used "for purposes that might best be described as aesthetic: forging friendships, making music, discovering new ways of looking at the world," while English occupies the business sphere (Fettes 2007: 17). Still, Fettes observes that, "from the earliest years of Esperanto in Asia, the language was associated with modernization, technical rationalism, and social progress" (2007: 20). Therefore, necessarily, "from an Asian perspective, Esperanto has always been associated with Europe, the region where modernity had its beginnings" (Fettes 2007: 20).

Brazil also has a notably high Esperanto-speaking population, whose origins Jorge explains:

> Esperanto is not tied to any religion or philosophy but, in Brazil, Spiritualists [sic] give it a strong support. I don't know what you call it in the USA, but the religion founded in France by Allan Kardec is called 'Espiritismo' here and has many followers. Around 1930, a famous medium called Chico Xavier received a spiritual message saying that Esperanto had been created by 'spirits of light' and transmitted to Zamenhof. The Brazilian Spiritist Federation started printing everything they could in Esperanto. … [Spiritists] strongly

believe that Esperanto is the language of the 3rd millenium [sic]. It will replace all other languages when they disappear from the earth.

According to the Federação Espírita Brazileira, the Brazilian Spiritist Federation, Spiritism and Esperanto are "driven by the same ideals of fraternity"[16], or as Jorge puts it, the Esperanto idea of global brotherhood is "fundamental" to the Spiritist's perception of the language (Cem anos). "Many of them think in the future there will be a Godly world government and Esperanto will become the common language for all" (Jorge).

The Federação provides more detail about the rise of Esperanto within Brazilian Spiritism. They refer to a "triad of inspiring Esperantist achievements in Brazilian Spiritist circles," the first of which was written by J. Camille Chaigneau, and published in 1909 in *Reformador*, the leading Spiritist journal in Brazil. Chaigneau asserted, "If we were to seek the origin of this language, we would confirm that it came to be as an act of collaboration with the Unseen"[17] (qtd. in O Esperanto). This addresses the faith-based rationale for taking up Esperanto, but Chaigneau also provided more practical reasons why Spiritists and non-Spiritists alike should support Esperanto:

> It does not threaten any national language, and it was chosen by a commission of wise men as an auxiliary international language, recommended for adoption in different countries. Because of this, most universal movements would benefit from Esperanto. ... Considering the amount of information that escapes us Spiritists due to a lack of translations, the delay that that very translation brings to our own documentation, it seems that Spiritism should have every interest in constructing a core journal in which salient information can be gathered, thanks to a common language for all nations (qtd. in O Esperanto).

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[16] Original text in Portuguese. Translation mine.
[17] Original text in Portuguese. Translation mine.

While Chaigneau set the groundwork for Esperanto in the Spiritist community, it was Chico Xavier who brought Esperanto to the forefront some decades later.

Chico Xavier, whom Jorge mentioned above, was a Spiritist Medium, and produced many texts through psychography, during which spirits take control of the medium to transmit written messages. Xavier, whose birth name is Francisco de Paula Cândido, psychographically received the other two texts of the "triad": "*The Mission of Esperanto*, by Spirit Emmanuel, and *Esperanto as a Revelation*, by Spirit Francisco Valdomiro Lorenz, … on January 19, 1940 and January 19, 1959, respectively" (O Esperanto). To understand the extent of Xavier's impact on the Brazilian population, it is important to know that he was also a popular television personality throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and that for thirty-five years he "welcomed hundreds of thousands seeking spiritual counseling in to his humble home" (Oliveira 2010). When he died in 2002, "he was revered so highly his viewing drew a line of mourners that stretched four kilometers (2.4 miles), with 40 people passing by his coffin per minute" (Oliveira 2010). A biographic film released in 2010, "during its three-day premier … was watched in the theater by more people than any Brazilian movie in 15 years. In 10 days, 1.36 million had packed theaters to watch it" (Oliveira 2010). Xavier's long-standing popularity as a public figure and philanthropist contributed to a widespread awareness of Spiritism and, by extension, Esperanto.

Today, Brazil is one of the leading regions for the publication of Esperanto texts[18] (Becker 2006: 286). According to the Brazilian census, in 2000 there were

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[18]According to a ten-year survey from 1991 to 2000, a Brazilian publishing house, Fonto, published the second-highest number of titles: 55, and the third-highest number of pages: 7,289 (Becker 286).

approximately 2.26 million, or 1.3% self-proclaimed Spiritists in a population of

almost 170 million (Brazil 2000). More recently, according to the 2010 census, the

Brazilian population has increased to over 190 million, which, assuming a sustained

proportion of Spiritists, would yield almost 2.5 million practicing Spiritists (Censo

2010). This is not to say that Esperanto is necessarily spoken by millions of people in

Brazil, but that these millions of Spiritists, and the many Brazilians familiar with

Spiritism, are all likely to have some idea of what Esperanto is. Ultimately, this

creates a popular awareness of Esperanto more similar to that of European countries

than to that of other countries in the Americas.

Will, who is from the United States, speculates about how differing

concentrations of Esperantists affects the experiences of individual Esperantists in

different parts of the world:

> Generally speaking, the experience of … European Esperantists would be
> different from American Esperantists. The sense is typically that the language
> is bigger in Europe than it is in the United States. Certainly more congresses
> and events tend to happen in Europe than do in the United States. So, there's
> perhaps more to do that is accessible and close by with Esperanto in Europe as
> opposed to the United States, so that tends to change a little bit the approach
> people wind up having to the language there, in the sense that … it's very easy
> to get involved with planning things and going to things, whereas in the
> United States that's not as true. … You kind of have to work at that a little bit
> more. … There are definitely places where Esperanto enjoys a certain
> prominence, … Brazilian Esperantists, for instance, … may be more open
> about their use of the language. They know they don't have to explain it from
> the beginning.

In her description of her experiences as an Esperantist in the Ukraine, Yevgeniya

confirms Will's speculation: "I never really had to explain and I never really had a

negative reaction." In Sweden, according to Helm:

> Most people have heard about Esperanto. They know about it. … When they
> were launching the Euro here in Europe, then it happened that they were

speaking all about, "is it some kind of Esperanto money?" … I daresay that the people in general have an idea of Esperanto … as a bridge language or whatever you would call it, … but generally people know nothing about how our language works.

So, while the word "Esperanto" may not draw a blank, when Helm has been heard speaking Esperanto in public, he says, people have "thought we were Finn. Sometimes they thought we were trying to speak Japanese." And even though there is general awareness of Esperanto, that doesn't mean that outside opinions are entirely positive. "Sometimes … people think that it's a very stupid thing to imagine that you can make a language and then make people speak it, so they would think that many Esperantists are more or less nerds, that we're cranks, [but] I think this has disappeared over the years." Even though, as Will suggests, European Esperantists might have to explain less about the premise of Esperanto, they are not exempt from having to justify it.

Nevertheless, Yevgeniya's and Helm's words reveal a marked difference between their experiences and those of Esperantists in the United States or Canada. Though North American Esperantists do not usually confront negative reactions, they often encounter complete ignorance or misconceptions from people outside of the community. Normand shares misinformation that he frequently hears when he tells someone that he speaks Esperanto:

> Usually people will think that the goal or the main purpose of Esperanto is to replace all languages so that there will be only one language on earth. This is not the point at all. It is to offer the world a common language to facilitate communication. So often when I mention I speak Esperanto people around me react as, "Yeah, but Esperanto will never succeed to replace the language," and I have to explain, "No, it's not the point." … Or … they say it's no use to learn this language because they think that no one can speak it.

Randy, from the United States, has his own stories:

In the United States, most people have never heard of it before. So often, the initial question is, "Is that Spanish?" And then often times if people have heard of it before, they read it in some encyclopedia when they were a kid and they say, "Oh yeah, didn't that die in the 20's or something? Isn't that a dead language?" So, sometimes you have to do some re-education, so to speak and tell people, "Well, no, actually it's still a working living language and it is a language in and of itself. It's not some dialect of Spanish or anything, it is its own language."

Joshua feels like there is an expectation that "Esperanto speakers are probably going to be greasy, unwashed, trench coat-wearing, Dungeons-and-Dragons-playing, Star Trek convention-attending, social outcasts."

When you mention Esperanto, if people have heard of it before, they typically ask you if you attend Star Trek conventions. And, actually, contrary to that, my experience with Esperanto is that in general the people I've met who have spoken it or are interested in it have been unusually or surprisingly normal seeming (Joshua).

Joshua estimates that, "two to five percent of the people I talk to have heard of Esperanto," but he adds that he often speaks to fellow linguists, who might be more likely to have an awareness of the language.

Among linguists, unless they're really interested in created language or just interested in it from a theoretical standpoint, there's a lot of derision … Derision like, "Oh it's not a real language; it's not really worthy of study; it's not really worthy of learning. Oh, ha, you're one of those people" (Joshua).

Jim, who runs Esperanto tables at science fiction conventions, might be the only participant who comes close to filling some of the stereotypes concerning Esperanto speakers. He compares awareness of Esperanto within different sectors of the population. "Among family and friends and casual acquaintances, I would say complete ignorance is the more common response." In contrast:

The Esperanto information tables we run at science fiction conventions, for instance, … get a larger number of people who are vaguely aware of the language, that know what it is, but probably weren't aware that it has as many speakers, or was as currently active as it is. Probably out of the people we

spoke to, … probably at least a quarter of them knew what the language was, probably more than half, before we spoke to them.

It is logical that there is a higher awareness among convention attendants if there is often someone promoting Esperanto at this kind of event. So, even if there is not a huge percentage of science-fiction convention attendees who speak Esperanto, Esperantists seem to think that it is a population worth targeting. Maybe, even if Esperantists are not predominantly fans of science fiction, a mindset that can embrace science fiction is a little more primed to embrace the idea of a future world in which people speak Esperanto as an auxiliary language than is the population at large.

2.2 Gender distribution

In this study and others conducted, there is a noteworthy indication of a gender imbalance in the Esperanto speech community. In a 1985 hallmark study, Nikola Rašic found a 7:3 ratio of men to women (Fettes 1996: 55). Moreover, according to Mark Fettes, "this disproportion between the sexes was found in nearly every study reported, and appears to be related both to greater organized participation by men and by their greater willingness to respond to surveys" (1996: 55). Of my 13 participants, 10 were male and 3 were female. Beyond the fact that there were only 3 female participants, the only direct responses received were from males; the female participants were either wives of participants or referred to the study by another male participant. In the last set of interviews, with Joel and Yevgeniya, who reside in Canada but are from the United States and the Ukraine, respectively, the gender imbalance came up organically:

It is interesting to see that in some countries the Esperanto community would tend to be more young or more old, or, you know, sometimes there is some … gender gap. … When I came to the United States I discovered that most of the Esperanto speakers are male, while in Ukraine –

Here Joel interjected, "—in the United States, the younger people tend to be more male, the older people tend to be more women." Joel and Yevgeniya pondered possible reasons behind this disparity at length. Joel explained:

When I was in the Ukraine, I was surprised that it's the reverse. Especially, the young people, the majority are female in the Esperanto clubs and involved in Esperanto, up to, I would say seventy percent. And, my take on the situation in the United States is … I think you'll find a lot of these young males who are Esperantists in the United States are also usually very good with technology, and they most likely learned through the Internet. … If you took that same sampling of people, of young Esperantists, males, in the United States, you'd also find a high percentage of computer programmers and related professions. Say, if you look at average, kind of, US Esperanto convention, there's a lot of older retired ladies, there's men too but more women, who learned Esperanto back, you know, in younger years, maybe left it for a while when they had families or careers, and they came back to it in their retirement age, as a hobby that they had missed, whereas with the younger males it's the Internet and technology aspect.

In contrast, according to Yevgeniya, "in Ukraine the majority of … speakers would be somebody who likes playing, who is linguistically inclined, and those are mostly females in Ukraine." There, there is also a prevalent social component of Esperanto. "In Kiev there are two Esperanto clubs where you can go and talk to people in Esperanto, while in the United States there are not that many." Normand touches on this as well, saying:

The Esperanto community in America is really not as extended as it is in Europe where you can really find Esperantists all over and it's easy to participate. Almost every weekend you can go somewhere and use Esperanto because there's something going on. In America there's only a few Esperanto weekends organized. … Except for the United States Esperanto Convention and a few weekends, there's not too many activities.

Joel adds:

> There's more isolation, more distance, among a lot of Esperanto speakers in the United States because of geography and all of that. That may have bearing on the gender issue. Maybe the males who are oriented towards technology may be perfectly comfortable learning the language in isolation and possibly females … want something more socially engaging.

According to Esperanto-USA, there are as many as 81 registered Esperanto clubs, groups, or societies in the United States (Local Groups). While this may seem like a fairly large number, consider that 15 states have no Esperanto registered organizations, that several of the links to registered organizations lead to expired URLs, and that, as seen in Chart 2.1.1, some states have as few as one registered member. The speculation, therefore, is that the reason for different gender distributions within regionalized Esperanto-speaking populations is the kind of Esperanto community available to potential speakers.

Taking these insights into consideration, let us examine the participant data. Participant data will be separated into the following categories for evaluation: Male v. Female and High-Density Area (HDA) v. Low-Density Area (LDA). Participants who learned Esperanto while living in the United States of America or Canada are considered to be from a Low-Density Area; participants from Europe and Brazil are considered to be from a High-Density Area. This division of subjects is derived from Joel's and Yevgeniya's belief that Esperanto is likely to be spoken by younger males or individuals with technological rather than social interests in areas where a lower density of speakers limits the social opportunities offered by Esperanto acquisition. The expectation is that LDA speakers will be younger, on average, and predominantly male, while HDA females will be more numerous than and younger than HDA males.

There were 6 HDA participants, three females and three males. One of the women is originally from Croatia and two are originally from the Ukraine. Two of the women now live in Canada and are wives of male participants. The third woman still lives in the Ukraine, and was referred to the study by Helm. Normand, who is Canadian, started learning Esperanto while living in France. Because his original experiences as an Esperanto speaker took place in a HDA he will be counted within that set, though his subsequent experiences give him insight into the contrasts between the HDA and LDA experiences. The other two HDA men are from Uppsala, Sweden and Recife, Brazil. The 7 LDA participants were male, from Atlanta (3), Oakland, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and Madison. The gender distribution of participants does not seem anomalous within the distribution of Esperanto speakers at large, though women are not the majority among HDA participants. However, the fact that participants were solicited through an Esperanto e-mailing list, which necessitates a certain level of technological ability, and remembering Mark Fette's assertion that men are more likely to participate in a study, might be responsible for a deceptively low number of female participants.

The numbers of interest are: the current age of participants and the age at which they started learning Esperanto. Looking at the age of Esperanto acquisition is significant because participants' current ages may obscure the fact that participants once comprised a young sector of the Esperanto-speaking community.

Chart 2.2.1: Participant Current Age	
Participant	Age
Will	25
Joshua	29
Joel	32
Yevgeniya	32
Jim	37
Randy	41
Tatyana	53
Normand	54
Jorge	55
stevo	55
Zdravka	58
Jerry	68
Helm	73
	Average: 47.1

Chart 2.2.2: Participant Age of Acquisition	
Participant	Age
Helm	13
Joshua	14
Zdravka	16
Joel	16
Jerry	17
stevo	17
Jorge	18
Randy	20
Yevgeniya	22
Will	22
Tatyana	23
Jim	23
Normand	24
	Average: 18.8

Chart 2.2.3: Participant Current Age, by Gender	
Participant	Age
Yevgeniya	32
Tatyana	53
Zdravka	58
	Average: 47.7
Will	25
Joshua	29
Joel	32
Jim	37
Randy	41
Normand	54
Jorge	55
stevo	55
Jerry	68
Helm	73
	Average: 46.9

Chart 2.2.4: Participant Age of Acquisition, by Gender	
Participant	Age
Zdravka	16
Yevgeniya	22
Tatyana	23
	Average: 20.3
Helm	13
Joshua	14
Joel	16
stevo	17
Jerry	17
Jorge	18
Randy	20
Will	22
Jim	23
Normand	24
	Average: 18.4

Chart 2.2.5: Participant Current Age, by Density Area (High v. Low)	
Participant	Age
Yevgeniya	32
Tatyana	53
Normand	54
Jorge	55
Zdravka	58
Helm	73
	Average: 54.2
Will	25
Joshua	29
Joel	32
Jim	37
Randy	41
stevo	55
Jerry	68
	Average: 41

Chart 2.2.6: Participant Age of Acquisition, by Density Area (High v. Low)	
Participant	Age
Helm	13
Zdravka	16
Jorge	18
Yevgeniya	22
Tatyana	23
Normand	24
	Average: 19.3
Joshua	14
Joel	16
stevo	17
Jerry	17
Randy	20
Will	22
Jim	23
	Average: 18.4

Chart 2.2.7: Participant Current Age, by Gender and Density Area (High v. Low)	
Participant	Age
Yevgeniya	32
Tatyana	53
Zdravka	58
	Average: 47.7
Normand	54
Jorge	55
Helm	73
	Average: 60.7
Will	25
Joshua	29
Joel	32
Jim	37
Randy	41
stevo	55
Jerry	68
	Average: 41

Chart 2.2.8: Participant Age of Acquisition, by Gender and Density Area (High v. Low)	
Participant	Age
Zdravka	16
Yevgeniya	22
Tatyana	23
	Average: 20.3
Helm	13
Jorge	18
Normand	24
	Average: 18.3
Joshua	14
Joel	16
stevo	17
Jerry	17
Randy	20
Will	22
Jim	23
	Average: 18.4

The data shows that, as expected, the average current age of HDA speakers is more than 13 years higher than the average current age of LDA speakers. Furthermore, when comparing between HDA and LDA men, that difference changes to almost 20 years. In fact, only two LDA males' current ages fall within the range of current ages for HDA males. Here, the current age is indicative because the change to learning via the Internet is relatively recent. Data regarding age of acquisition shows that Esperanto study tends to commence at an early age, regardless of density area, gender, or current age. The average age at which all participants began studying Esperanto is 18.8, and there is only an 11-year spread in ages. The relative average ages of acquisition between HDA and LDA males, respectively, are almost the same: 18.3 versus 18.4. The HDA average age of acquisition with women included increases to 19.3, still very close to the LDA average age. These numbers confirm that among participants there are currently more young speakers in the LDA group, which is also entirely male. However, they also show that there has been no apparent change in age of acquisition, even if the reasons or methods may have changed. It could be suggested that older LDA males may have also learned Esperanto at an older age, and that currently young LDA males might have a lower age of acquisition, but this does not seem to be the case. Jerry and stevo, the two oldest LDA males, both started learning Esperanto at 17, younger than the average, 18.4.

Regarding the second branch of the expectations, the data is more limited. As discussed above, there are only 3 female participants, all of whom are HDA. This number is equal to the number of male HDA participants. Within the group of HDA

participants, the average current age of females is 13 years less than that of males. Only one of the women falls within the range of HDA men's current ages. However, the women's average current age is still 6.7 years higher than the average current age of LDA males. Also, their average age of acquisition is 2 years higher than the average for HDA males and 1.9 years higher than the average for all males. Among participants, this would suggest that women might not comprise a larger proportion of young HDA Esperanto speakers, but there are few data points. The data shows that HDA women's age of acquisition, if marginally higher, follows the general trend among participants. While the data can support assertions regarding the ages of different groups of speakers, the numbers alone cannot speak to the reasons behind observed differences in gender distribution by location and age.

Let us expand the framework to be able evaluate the other part of Yevgeniya's and Joel's proposal: that there is a correlation between age and gender differences based on a geographic effect on Esperanto learning environments.

Chart 2.2.9: Participant Preliminary Methods of Esperanto Study			
HDA			
Women	Tatyana	Ukrainian	Heard about Esperanto from friends who were taking a class, and though she at first rejected it, she later came to it and continued using it even after her friends lost interest.
	Zdravka	Croatian	Started taking Esperanto as an after-school class offered by one of her regular teachers. Her father was also an Esperantist.
	Yevgeniya	Ukrainian	Already knew about it but was encouraged to study Esperanto by her job supervisor, who recommended her for participation in Esperanto courses.
Men	Normand	Canadian (France)	Heard about Esperanto when he studied abroad in France and saw a poster announcing that classes were being offered.
	Helm	Sweden	Took a correspondence course, later joining an Esperanto club/course in Stockholm.
	Jorge	Brazil	Is originally self-taught from a book, but then took a course and promptly joined the local Esperanto Association.
LDA			
Men	Randy	USA	Read about Esperanto in the encyclopedia and taught himself Esperanto from an English-Esperanto/Esperanto-English dictionary.
	Joshua	USA	Was often referred to Esperanto because of his interest in language invention. He bought a textbook and started teaching it to himself, later taking a class in college for more exposure.
	Jim	USA	Found Esperanto while web surfing. He is self-taught through the use of the Internet and books.
	Will	USA	Took a not-for-credit university class but also studied on his own using a textbook and lernu.net.
	Jerry	USA	Found a reference to Esperanto in a book, started teaching himself out of a book, and later took a university class.
	stevo	USA	Started teaching himself the language out of a dictionary given to him by a friend.
	Joel	USA	Read about Esperanto in an encyclopedia and found a book out of which to teach himself the language.

All of the women, all of whom learned Esperanto while living in Eastern Europe, were drawn in to study of the language by another person. All of these women then studied the language in a class setting. Their Esperanto experience was therefore social from the outset, and at least partially impelled by social motivators. Normand, who is Canadian but began studying Esperanto in Europe because he felt linguistically under-equipped, also took a class, thereby having a social first experience. Helm might be described as self-taught, but because he took a correspondence course he was not learning Esperanto in isolation. Only one HDA male, Jorge, was truly self-taught, though he claims to have "devoured the whole book in a few hours, and then [gone] looking for an Esperanto club." In contrast, only one LDA male, Will, was not self-taught. However, only Jim and Will specifically mention using the Internet to teach themselves the language, and Will was using it as a personal supplement to his in-class lessons. Additionally, Jim and Will represent the two highest LDA ages of acquisition. This data supports the assertion that HDA Esperanto learning tends to be more social, and that this social element plays a role in an increased participation by women. Participant data does not conclusively support the observation that LDA young male speakers are more likely to be attracted to Esperanto through the Internet, but it does show that independent learning is prevalent.

The fact that so many LDA speakers are self-taught is significant because it entails that for many, real Esperanto interaction came years after they started to learn it, and years after they were technically capable of using it. Randy, for example, started studying Esperanto in 1989, but "the first time [he] spoke Esperanto face to

face with someone was in 1992 at the US Esperanto Conference." Joshua, who started learning Esperanto at fourteen, "never actually talked to anybody, [and] barely even spoke it out loud until [he] was in [a] class in college," about four years later. He says of the transition, "it was kind of funny. Because in a certain way, I'd been learning all these years and I believed it existed in the world, but to actually speak it and have somebody understand it was kind of a revelation." Joel reveals that when he started learning Esperanto:

> I didn't really think there were people who spoke in Esperanto, at least not in this continent … I was pretty much isolated because I didn't have contact with other Esperanto speakers … I learned basically from a book. … I didn't have speaking interaction, spoken interaction with other Esperantists for about two years.

Jim observes, "I would say that's a pretty common pattern in my experience, … one attains reading fluency studying on their own and then in a relatively short time being among Esperanto speakers they acquire speaking fluency." In his case, even when he started attending club meetings in Atlanta, he didn't speak anyway. "I was really at that point a little too shy to try talking Esperanto much, or in English for that matter." At his first congress, the 1985 Universal Congress of Esperanto, stevo, who had been "haphazardly" studying Esperanto since 1972, says he was "able to practice [his] Esperanto quite a bit, although not as much as others might have done, since [he's] basically shy." Jim was not so shy as to not attend local gatherings, and stevo was not so shy as to not attend the congress, but even so it took them years to start participating in social Esperanto gatherings, and there may very well be many other Esperanto speakers who are too shy to ever participate in person-to-person Esperanto communication.

Chapter 3:
The Esperanto Speech Community

"By learning the language, Esperanto speakers automatically become members of the community and participants in the culture."
                                          - Sabine Fiedler[19]

3.1 Terminology and definitions

The idea of speech communities is central to sociolinguistic study, and the variability of its definition speaks to the variability of language use and culture. An early definition of "speech community" comes from Dell Hymes.

> A speech community is defined … as a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use. Both conditions are necessary" (1974: 51).

This traditional definition, while not explicitly so, does not readily consider groups structured like that of Esperanto speakers. More recently, Marcyliena Morgan expanded the definition, saying:

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[19] (2006: 77).

> Because they are constructed around culturally and socially constituted interaction, speech communities cannot be defined by static physical location and can be experienced as part of a nation-state, neighborhood, village, club, compound, on-line chat room, religious institution, and so on (2001: 31).

Interactions within a speech community are "regulated, represented, and recreated through discursive practices," and when it is these discursive practices that bring people together, they "behave as though they operate within a shared set of norms, local knowledge, beliefs, and values" (2001: 31). "What is shared among its members is knowledge of language ideology and attitude towards language use" (2001: 32). Within this broadened definition, the unique conditions of Esperanto speakers do not exclude them from consideration as a speech community. The speech community of Esperanto speakers is experienced within clubs, conferences, forums, correspondence, and households, but none of these is comprehensive of the community. Esperanto speakers do not have a shared physical location, as the intent is to be global, but small communities of speakers are often organized in areas with a high enough concentration. Regional or global conferences may bring more speakers together, but many members of the speech community never attend even a local gathering. The speech community at large is woven together predominantly through whatever forms of long-distance communication speakers have available: personal written correspondence, Skype calls, public Internet forums, and the occasional face-to-face meeting. Sabine Fiedler describes it as an "active network," that includes "an independent press as well as publishing houses[20], organizations, correspondence, collective traveling, radio programs, and meetings and conferences in which only Esperanto is spoken" (2006: 74). Esperanto speakers who, within their resources,

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[20] See Ulrich Becker's "Publishing for a diaspora: the development of publishing in the international Esperanto movement" for more on this topic.

actively engage with other speakers are responsible for the formation of the speech community.

The group of speakers of Esperanto is often referred to as a community or movement, but also as a diaspora. Sabine Fiedler argues that while "the speech community… is often compared to a diaspora … Esperanto speakers cannot look back on life in a common territory" (2006: 74), but Ulrich Becker gives the term "diaspora" special importance in relation to the Esperanto community:

> The term *diaspora* implies what the other two terms usually used (community, movement) disguise: that the speakers of Esperanto, living spread out in the world, have their own individual values, different lives, educational backgrounds, religious and political convictions – and that they have basically only two things in common: first, they consciously choose the planned language Esperanto as a language to speak and to use for international contacts; and, second, after a few years of using this language many of them incorporate the cultural values Esperanto offers them and develop an identity as speakers or users of Esperanto, as Esperantists. However, most of them are not, or not always, an active part of the community or of the movement and stay out of touch with it for long periods of time (2006: 270).

Becker explains that the use of "diaspora" is applicable because "the term … has been taken over by others to describe their own international community," and its use is "in most cases not at all in connection with a common religious background, but with the goal of maintaining a common cultural and linguistic identity" (2006: 270). "Diaspora" does things that other group terms cannot. "Diaspora" conveys the element of geographic distance between speakers critical to the Esperanto experience, while "community" conceals, if not implies the opposite of, this component. However, with the exception of native speakers of Esperanto, Esperantists are not "maintaining" an identity; they are forging one. They are not a people once united that have been scattered across the world; they are a scattered array of people who

have chosen to unite under a language and perhaps its ideals. Also, though "diaspora" clearly communicates the internationality of Esperanto speakers, it neglects the element of choice. The Manifesto of Rauma better explains the relevance of the word. One of the first uses of "diaspora" in reference to the Esperanto community was in 1980 in the Manifesto of Rauma, to "point out that the search for a proprietary identity leads us to the understanding that being an Esperantist means belonging to a *self-elected* diaspora of a linguistic minority" (qtd. In Becker 2006: 270, emphasis added). Becker concedes that "the most active Esperantists prefer the labels *community* and *movement* because they foreground the common political and educational goals of the core of active speakers of the language" (2006: 271). It would seem that "diaspora" is most suitable when referencing the physical manifestation of Esperanto speakers; "community" is perhaps the most widely applicable if only because it is the most general, and "movement" best represents the active participation in and promotion of Esperanto ideals.

Another commonly used term is "Esperantist," but it, too, generates a variety of reactions.

Are you an Esperantist?

"I would call myself an Esperantist." – Will

 "Yes, because I speak the language." – Tatyana

"I do call myself an Esperantist." – Randy

"I would say yes, but I usually don't … use that word to describe myself. … I usually just say Esperanto speaker." – Jim

"I'm an Esperantist because I like the idea of speaking a world language that is that way, that is neutral, and opens you to other culture and that gives you the opportunity to make friends around the world." – Normand

"I have no problem considering myself an Esperantist. But, I do use that word with caution." – Joel

"I could call myself an Esperantist in a kind of nearly political sense that I think it should be good if people used it. But otherwise I would merely prefer to refer to myself as an Esperanto speaker." – Helm

"I'm still an Esperantist in the sense that I am still a user, but I'm not a member of the movement anymore." – Jorge

"I would not call myself an Esperantist now because of the falloff in fluency and my current lack of dedication to the language. I don't seek to promote it or to teach it or, use it as far as that goes. So I would not be qualified as far as that goes, then." – Jerry

"I would definitely call myself an Esperantist; I would say it with pride." – Joshua

Now, in 2011, though definitions provided by participating Esperanto speakers echoed the original definition of the term, somehow "Esperantist", at least in English, seems to have the burden of extensive connotations. According to the original definition drafted in the Bolougne Declaration of the first international Esperanto congress, "Esperantist" and "Esperanto speaker" should be equivalent terms. But, as seen in the excerpts above, most participants gave the word more meaning. While Will, Tatyana, and Randy comfortably call themselves Esperantists, albeit with some

further clarification later on, Jim acknowledges that the term is applicable to him but shies away from it for self-identification. In his aversion to it, he hints at an existing difference of meaning. By Normand's definition, to be an Esperantist is to be someone who supports, or at least agrees with, the idea of a world language. Helm echoes this, giving the word a political edge, and prefers the alternative of Esperanto speaker. Jorge and Jerry also tie promotion of the language to the meaning or connotation of the word, Jerry going so far as to say he is no longer "qualified" to be an Esperantist because of a lack of dedication to the language. Lastly, Joshua provides a glowing confirmation of identifying as an Esperantist.

Unique among all of these responses was the second part of Tatyana's reply: "But, I divide in my perception of [Esperanto], two things: the language and the idea. I don't like the idea. I don't like any idea, any religion, because they made me not to see other things. But, I like the language, so I am Esperantist." Unfortunately, Tatyana does not provide further explanation for this statement, nor does she define what she means by "the idea". This could be a reference to the idea of human brotherhood, or it could be a reference to homaranismo, the faith structure that Zamenhof tried to link with Esperanto. If that were the case, her dislike of "the idea" might stem from Soviet/Eastern European atheism. Despite her conceptual aversion, Tatyana's experience as a member of the global Esperanto community has given her many benefits (to be discussed in a later chapter) that have stemmed from Esperantic ideals.

Part of the perceived problem with the term "Esperantist" comes from the –ist suffix, which in English generally indicates the holding of a belief. Therefore, to call

oneself an Esperantist can be misleading, in that others will think it means more than

just 'a speaker of Esperanto.' Helm points out that this is an odd nomenclature, as no

one calls himself an Anglicist for speaking English, and so on. Joel says that the word

is safe within the community, where people usually know what it is supposed to

mean, but dangerous outside of the community, where the second reading is likely to

be more prevalent and lead to unintended implications.

Participants also offered alternative terms that explicitly convey some of the

nuances that might be implied or obscured by "Esperantist." Randy expanded his self-

identification as follows:

> I also call myself an active Esperantist. In Esperanto I would say a
> "movadano", which means a member of the Esperanto movement … to me an
> Esperantist is someone who speaks and understands Esperanto. So you don't
> have to have any special interest in any special beliefs to be an Esperantist,
> you just have to use the language, and I certainly do that. I then also am an
> active member of the Esperanto movement, which I don't believe you have to
> be to be an Esperantist.

Adhering to what could be called the basic meaning of "Esperantist," Randy adds

qualifiers or additional terms to ensure that his intended meaning is conveyed.

Similarly, Jim says:

> If I need to distinguish someone who is fluent in Esperanto from someone
> who isn't fluent in Esperanto but approves of the language and the goals of the
> Esperanto movement I would say "friends of Esperanto" or "member of the
> Esperanto movement".

Joshua also offers the term "Esperantujo", an Esperanto term:

> -Ujo is the ending that denotes a container for something, and it used to be
> used for countries, so … "Francujo" was a container of Frenchmen, or
> "France", and it's not really used that way anymore, but Esperantujo is
> theoretically a 'container of hopers,' and it's used to refer to the Esperanto
> community at large.

Lernu!'s translation device glosses "Esperantujo," perhaps more literally, as "Esperantoland". So, this term might be a fitting alternative to represent the collective of Esperantists, who form a geographically dispersed but ideologically connected community of hopers: the Esperantujo.

3.2 Norms and ideologies

The assumption might be that the geographic dispersal of Esperanto speakers would lead to de-regularization of the language through the development of regionalisms and colloquialisms. However, several forces inhibit Esperantic deviations. The Akademio de Esperanto, established in 1905, has the following responsibilities:

> (1) To conserve and protect the language according to its norms and to control its development; (2) to explore all linguistic questions concerning Esperanto; (3) to review publications form the linguistic point of view; and (4) to defend Esperanto against all competitors (Fiedler 2006: 79).

While the *Akademio* may have official say, it cannot truly control speakers, and does not try to. In general it "concentrates its activities on conserving and exploring the language rather than on prescribing rules on the basis of its authority" (Fiedler 2006: 80). This means that when, for example, the *Akademio* accepted the suffixes "-ujo" and "-lando" for rendering geographic names, but ignored the popular suffix "-io," and yet speakers preferentially used "-io," "the Academy eventually decided to officially tolerate '-io'" (Fiedler 2006: 80). The Internet also has a significant part to play in the regulation of Esperanto because it enables rapid large-scale transmission of and access to information. Consequently, whether it is a publication or an exchange in an Internet forum, anyone, anywhere, can access anyone's Esperanto,

and this combats the geographic isolation of speakers, who could otherwise easily develop Esperanto dialects[21]. Another factor that insulates Esperanto from change is the way in which people become speakers. "There's so many new learners coming in that are learning out of textbooks that are sort of starting at the same point, and not a lot of folks who are kind of continuing the genetic growth of the language by, say, learning it from their parents. There is a control there" (Joshua). The majority of speakers acquire Esperanto through a static documentation, not verbalized communicative use, which keeps deviations from the original standard at bay.

Ultimately, speakers have the most control over the linguistic development of Esperanto. Esperanto speakers who meet monthly to speak the language socially, but also communicate individually with other Esperanto speakers elsewhere in the world, cannot develop local variations within the language without debilitating their own applications of its international utility. Speakers' awareness of the pitfalls of the dispersal of the speech community make them the most powerful tools in preserving Esperanto's uniformity. Randy expresses his fears and rationale against the development of colloquialisms in Esperanto:

> [They are] not going through any official process, they're just being used by individual speakers, and they catch on or don't catch on. And the risk there is that they'll catch on in one place, and then it becomes not only a colloquialism but a localism, which is sort of antithetical to the idea of Esperanto.

Central to the Esperanto speaker's language ideology is the idea of linguistic loyalty, defined by Uriel Weinreich in 1977:

> A language, like a nation, can be thought of as a certain set of rules of behavior; linguistic loyalty, like nationalism, then describes the state of consciousness in which the language (like the nation) as a closed unit and in

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[21] See Flavio Cimonari Rebello's "*Strangaj voĉoj el Interreto* [Strange Voices from the Internet]" for more on the appearance of and reaction to improper Esperanto use on Internet forums.

contrast to other languages, has a high rank within a range of values, a rank that is worthy and in need of "defence" (qtd in Fiedler 2006: 76).

It is not so much that Esperanto is actively policed within the community; rather, it is the awareness of the intended reach of the language that keeps speakers from deviating.

Supporting constancy does not translate into a quelling of creativity within Esperanto. The agglutinative word structure enables enhanced specificity[22] and wordplay through unique morphological combinations; what is dispreferred is the introduction of new roots, especially unnecessary loanwords[23] from dominant national languages. In Joshua's experience, lexical innovation is rather rare:

> Maybe because of the fact that people are sensitive to this needing to be a language that would be understandable in its base form to anybody, making up new words, … I don't know if I've ever actually seen it. I mean, there's a lot of creativity with using the existing words and building on them but not with importing new forms.

Within the Esperanto speech community, the language ideology puts a conscious premium on constancy, dictating the norms of use.

Still, because Esperanto has been around for over a century, language change is inevitable. Just like a natural language, the Esperantic lexicon has to reflect the development of new ideas and technologies. "Part of Zamenhof's idea is that it would be a living language … so you are allowed to create your own words, but the idea is that you try and use what morphemes are already out there, and you try and make it as international as possible, the broadest scope" (Randy). The problem is that "there are some people who like to just tack an 'o' … to the end of an [English] word"

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[22] See section 4.2: Practical attractions to Esperanto, for more on this topic

[23] *An Introduction to Language* defines a loan word: "Lexicons can be divided into native and non-native words, called loan words. A native word is one whose history or etymology can be traced back to the earliest known stages of the language" (474).

(Randy)[24]. In informal Esperanto communication with a limited reach, this kind of behavior can be seen as benign laziness or as seriously inconsiderate. In far-reaching Esperanto use, it can have detrimental ramifications on the consistency of the language.

The problem of excessive or inappropriate lexical innovation is visible especially in Esperanto poetry. Jim complains about having "experienced frustration, for instance, sometimes reading certain poets." His complaints stem both from a literary disapproval as well as from linguistic concern:

> It's a matter of using words that are only used in poetry and their form [is] supposedly poetic in impact but in practice they are more just academic or bookish in effect, because they're never used in ordinary spoken language. They don't have the resonance that a more commonly used – and therefore having a lot more emotional associations – word would have.

Most significant in regard to Esperanto at large, he says, "bad writing influences other writers and even speakers, it can have a deleterious effect on the language to make it harder to learn for new speakers, in general, especially for new speakers whose native language isn't Indo-European." Zamenhof himself established literature as a way of producing models for spoken Esperanto, so it is not unreasonable to fear that grammatically sloppy Esperanto writing might have an adverse effect on speakers seeking to develop their abilities. Randy understands the motivation for lexical innovation in poetry, but emphasizes the need to stay faithful to the original Esperanto lexicon.

> I certainly understand that for poetic purposes … people want more word choice, but I don't see a need for that to go outside the sphere of poetry, and also I think that when you do that, that really you should gloss those words

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[24] As shown in Chapter 1, the second rule of the Sixteen Rules of Esperanto states that "nouns are formed by adding –o to the root."

and provide a *Fundamenta* explanation of the words, using only words from the fundaments of Esperanto.

Both Jim and Randy agree that, ultimately, frivolous change is deleterious to the Esperanto objective. It overcomplicates the language. If excessive borrowing takes place, the language's lexicon grows unnecessarily and in a way that complicates acquisition for new speakers who do not speak the source language of the loanwords.

Another feature agreed upon by the Esperanto speech community is the ideal Esperanto accent. It was unanimously expressed that when listening to the majority of Esperanto speakers, one can discern their native language, or at least language family. However, the effect of their native language rarely affects a listener's comprehension. Because Esperanto only has five vowels, there is leeway for altered pronunciation before meaning is affected, which minimizes the disruptive effect of a foreign accent. More often, beginner speakers, who are likely to speak with a thicker accent as well as with grammatical mistakes, are the ones who are hard to understand. Helm describes the ideal Esperanto pronunciation: "vowels like in German, Polish, and Spanish, and Italian; consonants basically as German as Spanish as well, with the caveat in that you should be able to differentiate between B as in 'bottle' and V as in 'vent'." He says the goal is for a "continental European accent without specific traits of any specific language." Joel makes a distinction between accent and pronunciation:

> There is a correct pronunciation, … and people do have certain accents, especially if they're less, let's say, polished Esperanto speakers, and some people have a harder time with pronunciation, … but, there's no "correct accent". … As long as you pronounce the sounds correctly, then you're speaking Esperanto correctly. For example there's a correct way to pronounce the 'r' sound with the tongue [makes trilled 'r sound (represented as [r] in the International Phonetic Alphabet)], like in Italian, but if you pronounce it like in English it's not a disaster, … or in the throat like in French.

Joel contrasts Esperantist attitudes towards accents with American attitudes. An Esperantist may mentally notice the linguistic background of a fellow speaker, but "it's accepted that people are going to have an accent." "It's not like you're excluded … if you have an accent in English or whatever and you're with all native speakers. They're going to pick up on that and want to know where you're from. With Esperanto, no one's going to criticize the accent." In a linguistically homogeneous society, a foreign accent is marked, and makes the speaker a curiosity. In the Esperanto speech community, where almost everyone is a non-native speaker – and even native speakers have another native language – a subtly different accent is more like a different voice.

3.3 Approach to language

An analysis of the Esperanto speech community necessitates looking at members' relationship to language at large. Esperanto speakers are, certainly from a United States standpoint, anomalous for taking the time to learn additional languages, not even considering that at least one of them is not a natural language. All participants have studied at least 2 natural languages in addition to their native language, 2 have studied 8 languages, and the average number of natural languages studied is 5.7. The average number of L_2 natural languages studied is 4.5. Sabine Fiedler's research indicates that this is consistently the case, as "speakers possess a knowledge of, on average, 3.45 foreign languages in addition to Esperanto" (2006: 75). Similarly, participants in Nikola Rašic's study "declared a knowledge of" 3.4 languages, not including Esperanto or their native language (Fettes 1996: 55).

Chart 3.3.1: Number of Natural Languages Studied or Spoken by Individual Participants		
Participant	Number of L_2 Natural Languages Studied	Number of Natural Languages Studied
Randy	2	3
Zdravka	3	4
Jim	3	4
Will	3	4
Jerry	4	5
stevo	4	5
Tatyana*	4	6
Yevgeniya*	4	6
Normand	5	6
Helm	5	6
Jorge	6	7
Josh	8	9
Joel	8	9

* Have 2 L_1 Languages

Chart 3.3.2: Number of Natural Languages Spoken by Individual Participants	
Number of L_2 Languages Spoken	Number of Participants
2	1
3	3
4	4
5	2
6	1
8	2

Among the languages spoken or studied by participants, at varying degrees of fluency, are: American Sign Language, Ukrainian, Russian, English, Polish, Spanish, Swedish, Croatian, German, French, Italian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Latin, Welsh, Turkish, Hungarian, Catalan, Greek, Japanese, Czech, and Dutch. Many would argue that in contemporary society, just knowing English is enough to render most other national languages extraneous. Still, though all of the 13 participants are proficient or fluent in English, and 7 of whom are native English speakers, all of them have

pursued more languages. Moreover, 10 have studied Spanish; 9 have studied French (one as a native speaker); 9 have studied German, and 6 have studied Russian (two as native speakers).

Chart 3.3.3: Natural Languages Spoken by Participants	
Language	Number of Participants Who Have Studied It
ASL	1
Catalan	1
Croatian	2
Dutch	1
English	13
French	9
German	9
Greek	1
Hungarian	1
Italian	3
Japanese	3
Latin	3
Polish	3
Portuguese	2
Russian	6
Spanish	10
Swedish	2
Turkish	1
Ukrainian	2
Welsh	1

Considering English, French, Spanish, and Russian to be major national languages,[25] it is even more notable that all 13 participants speak some combination of two or more, with three speaking all four.

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[25] All have an estimated number of speakers in excess of 100 million and are among the six official languages of the United Nations (Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish).

Chart 3.3.4: Number of Participants Who Speak Multiple Major Languages	
Major Languages Spoken	Participants
English, Russian, Spanish, French	3
English, Russian, Spanish	2
English, Russian, French	1
English, French, Spanish	3
English, Spanish	2
English, French	2
Total	13

While my solicitation for participants was made in English, a fact that likely affected the prevalence of English among participants, other studies echo these results. Fiedler found, "the most widely spoken languages among Esperanto speakers are English, French, German, Latin, Spanish, and Russian" (75). Rašic, too, found, "the most widely spoken languages apart from Esperanto were English (59%, plus 6% native speakers), French (46%, plus 12% native speakers), and German (43%, plus 15% native speakers" (Fettes 1996: 55). The popularity of these major national languages among participants says something about Esperanto: people are learning it for some reason beyond mere necessity, and they have a uniquely dedicated interest in language. These two conclusions are supported by the high average number of languages studied by individuals, and by the high number of natural languages spoken or studied at some depth by participants, cumulatively (19 languages total). Participants' study of languages with fewer speakers further points to an interest in language as something more than a tool.

Indeed, several Esperanto speakers are also interested in other constructed languages, which, with the exception of Esperanto and a few others, have a limited

number of speakers[26]. All 13 participants have learned about, if not sought to acquire, constructed languages other than Esperanto, and 9 mentioned having spent time studying them.

Chart 3.3.5: Constructed Languages Studied by Participants	
Language	Number of Participants Who Have Studied It
El Glhetg	1
Ido	5
Interlingua	6
Ithkuil	1
Klingon	2
Láadan	1
Latejami	1
Lingua de Planeta	1
Loglan	1
Lojban	2
Novial	1
Riismo Esperanto	1
Toki Pona	1
Volapük	3

Chart 3.3.6: Number of Constructed Languages Studied by Individual Participants	
Participant	Constructed Languages Studied (excluding Esperanto)
Helm	2
Jerry	2
Joel	2
Joshua	2
Tatyana	2
Yevgeniya	2
Jim	3
Jorge	5
stevo	8

They have studied 14 different constructed languages, the two most popular being Interlingua and Ido. 6 studied Interlingua, a Latin-based universal language project; and 5 studied Ido, an offshoot of Esperanto. On average, participants who have studied constructed languages other than Esperanto have studied 3.1. Other constructed languages mentioned include: El Glhetg, Ithkuil, Klingon, Láadan, Latejami, Lingua de Planeta, Loglan, Lojban, Novial, Riismo (an Esperanto variant), Toki Pona, and Volapük.

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[26] Jerry, the President of the North American Ido Society says there are "only maybe 35 or 38 [members], and half of those are from outside of the North American hemisphere."

Even more interesting about the way Esperantists interact with language is that many have created their own. Joshua started his description of his coming to Esperanto with the words, "at some point in middle school I picked up the hobby of inventing languages," and it is clear that it has been a lifelong endeavor. Originally, he wanted to create a universal language, and so he felt like learning Esperanto would effect to supporting the competition – at least until he gave Esperanto a closer look and found much to appreciate. More recently, "most of [his] personal efforts have been in the area of what's known as artlanging, so not trying to make a philosophical language or have a particular purpose, but sort of trying to make them as strange and irregular and odd and cool as languages that actually exist." His education as a linguist and his experience as a language constructor give him an appreciation for the work of other language inventors:

> I'm interested in everybody's constructed languages, but … I have a soft spot for Volapük; it's such a terrible terrible language. But, this man, you know, it was his life's work, and I do sort of have this dream of one day becoming fluent in Volapük for absolutely no reason except that then I could write poetry in it and it would be the strangest thing that anybody had ever done.

Still, that does not keep him from finding flaws in constructed languages:

> When I was first in college, … I was thinking about how irritating some of Zamenhof's choices were and then I thought, "Could I actually do better?" And so I've spent, off and on over the last ten or eleven years, a lot of time trying to come up with something that would be better, which is a fun project.

Natural languages, however, receive different treatment from Joshua. They were not created to be perfect; they do not claim to be perfect, and they display the weathering of time, perhaps having worn down some complexities and picked up some foreign bodies over the centuries. And while Joshua may cast a critical eye on constructed

languages, he disagrees with the attitudes toward natural languages exhibited by other

Esperanto speakers he has encountered:

> Esperanto speakers nonetheless seem to feel that you shouldn't devote energy to studying other languages, … and that there is in fact something wrong with the irregularity of natural language … I find myself really being annoyed by Esperanto speakers making fun of how stupid it is that languages have idioms, and things like that. As a lover of language, somebody who spends a whole lot of time studying other languages for fun, and who thinks it's a worthwhile pursuit, that attitude I feel is really not a good one.

While Joshua may have experience with Esperantists who have negative attitudes

toward natural languages, the data presented here makes that perspective seem

anomalous within the Esperanto speech community.

Jim also constructs languages, and he uses Gjâ-zym-byn, his most fully

formed language, "for writing [his] diary and grocery lists and to-do lists and what

have you, and for thinking and praying." When asked about his intent for the

language, he replied:

> I started out having it as a purely private and personal language. But I didn't actually keep its existence secret, and a few people, beginning with an Esperanto pen-pal at the time, in Brazil, asked me questions about it and I put up a few of my notes about it online. And, as more people expressed interest, … I improved my online documentation for it.

He found motivation in the interest of self-expression, indeed creating a private

linguistic world, with no intent to disseminate his language or encourage others to

learn it. As the history of language invention shows, language inventors usually seek

to fill a void in what natural languages at their disposal allow them to express. In

Jim's case, Gjâ-zym-byn is "better at expressing changes of state, and space-time

relationships. It also has a dense vocabulary of emotional state words. … Not only

emotional but mental states in general." Its focus on internal states is particularly

suited for introspection, which is logical given that the language was designed for personal use, with no expectation of it being used for interpersonal communication.

Jerry, who has shifted his dedication from Esperanto to Ido, describes one of his own languages, Loijo. It contains only the letters j, k, l, m, n, p, o, i, and u: the letters typed by the right hand on a standard Qwerty keyboard. For him, developing it was about exploration, "to see how far [he] could develop that. But, the language sounds, because of its very limited number of phonemes, it sounds a little rough, … kind of babbling." He wanted:

> to develop it as a language to be taught in the elementary school, actually, as a first language to learn, so that students would learn components of a language and how a language goes together … in order to develop language learning skills, to allow them … to learn a natural language when they get to the high school. … English is such a horrible language to attempt to teach or to learn from, … so [the] intent was to use it as a teaching language for how to learn languages, in effect.

Jerry mentions that he is not a trained linguist, and therefore feels insufficiently prepared to fully develop a language, so Loijo will probably be left on the drawing board. Still, Jerry also helped develop Roila, Robot Interaction Language, to teach high school students how to communicate with a robot with a constructed language, and he continues his quest for the perfect universal language. He is the President of the North American Ido Society, but he is also interested in Lingua de Planeta and Paqatyl, two more universal language projects.

This brings us to Jorge de Oliveira, the creator of Paqatyl, who prefers to be referred to as Kior Olfaa, his Paqatyl name, when Paqatyl is being discussed. It would seem as though Jorge feeds on language. He is currently a member of the El Glhetg Language Committee, "responsible for several important changes in the language" of

the micronation of Talossa. Jorge also used to be a prominent figure in the Esperanto community. In 1994 he was "invited by Esperanto's big bosses to participate in a new endeavor: the creation of an international Esperanto organization, of which [he] was going to be the general manager," But, after people's personal issues interfered with its creation and Jorge was left "empty-handed," he "decided to leave the E-Movement forever." He had always disagreed with certain elements of Esperanto[27], and now he began to search for a better universal language. Eventually, he realized that the only solution was to make one himself. Jorge says, "I started buying books of as many languages as I could, and studied approximately 400 languages in order to learn enough to finish my project. I created several different projects before I said to myself, 'this is finally what I have always wanted.'" He described the process in more depth:

> For some years I was caught between the idea of developing an *a priori* conlang[28], but *a priori* conlangs usually sound unnatural. I didn't have much access to language books in the beginning, … I wanted the ones which were hardest to find: Basque, Turkish, African languages… When I buy one of those books, I read it in a few hours and then re-read it until I have almost learned it by heart. I usually look for the nice grammatical details. I love sitting at my desk comparing ten or twenty different languages.

One of the issues that Jorge has with Esperanto is that its linguistic roots are not truly international. For people whose languages do not have Latinate or Germanic roots, aside from the purported regularity of the language, ease of acquisition is minimized.

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[27] Jorge thinks Esperanto is too complex to meet its claims of simplicity and easy acquisition. He says, "the Esperanto movement tries to sell something it can't deliver," calling it a "ripoff." He believes that while it's "good for culture, especially for the translation of works from small countries that otherwise would be forgotten," "it's not very good for international communication, especially person to person. [It's] too big, difficult and Pan-European, good for those who know Latin or a Romance language, or even English."

[28] Okrent defines an *a priori* constructed language as one "completely created from scratch," while *a posteriori* constructed languages "takes most of their material from existing natural languages" (2009: 315). Jerry's Roila is an example of an *a priori* language, while Esperanto is an *a posteriori* language.

However, I had to ask whether in including hundreds of world languages, Paqatyl just becomes more equally exclusive rather than inclusive. Kior's explanation was, "it's psychologically favorable when someone recognizes in Paqatyl a feature from their own language. I want Paqatyl to be democratic, not a present from Europe and the USA to the colonized world." This was a keenly worded reply, because it contests a central premise that Esperanto, as a culturally neutral language, does not carry the cultural burden of colonization and imperialism that dominant natural languages have.

Kior knows that he is different, but he has a cause. He feels that "conlanging has become kind of a sport, and there are wackos who create one every month." He, instead, belongs to a select group among language creators. "Auxlangers are few and kind of hated by other conlangers, exactly because they have a higher ideal. They are interested in people and in communication, not only in themselves." Kior has devoted years to Paqatyl, turning his passion into something that will help the world – if the world can be bothered to learn it.

Saweli, a derivation of Rick Morneau's Latejami, was developed by stevo, who prefers that his name not be capitalized. stevo describes Saweli as a "super-Esperanto, but according to [his] own criteria," and intended for "personal use and study." As a derivation of another language, Saweli's structure and purpose are closely linked to those of Latejami, the "fifth major variation" of what was originally known as Katanda.

> Morneau's design goals included the language being unambiguously translatable to another language by computer. … He incorporated many different features into the language so that it could easily transfer meaning to the target language. Another design goal is known as self-segregating

morphology, which means that any series of syllables can be interpreted in only one way, even if spaces and punctuation are removed.

Moreover:

> By using the various features of Latejami, large families of words may be created from a minimum of components. The most extreme example of this feature, which Esperanto shares to a certain degree, is the group of words based on the classifier for epistemic probability. There are about 143 regular grammatical variations of this root in the Latejami dictionary, yet in English a distinct, often unrelated word is needed for each of the variations.

Another feature stevo touts is that "Latejami and Saweli have one of the smallest grammars. … It fits onto a single page." Saweli clearly stems from the language-inventing motivations of simplifying, eradicating vagueness, and adhering to logicality.

Esperantists are conscious of the fact that their interests differ from those of the general population, but it is in these differences that Esperantists come together. A curiosity about language is clearly a central commonality. This curiosity, which for some would be more accurately described as an acquisitive hunger, translates into a shared language ideology that is a crucial component of the Esperanto speech community, in that it predisposes them to be receptive to the study of Esperanto.

Chapter 4:
Why Esperanto?

"You can do anything you want in Esperanto: quarrel and be abusive and kind and loving and whatever."

> *- Helm*

"Esperanto bridges gaps, bridges communication, cultural gaps, between people as we speak. And I've experienced that in my own life."

> *– Joel*

"[Esperanto] provided me with opportunities that I couldn't find in the rest of my life."

> *-Humphrey Tonkin[29]*

While Esperanto speakers might be lovers of language, it takes more than

being a language lover to become an Esperanto speaker. There is a "wide range from

idealistic, 'let's have everyone in the world speak Esperanto,' to pragmatic,

'Esperanto's fun to use, let's just use it'" (Randy). But, no matter how idealistic a

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[29] (qtd. in Okrent 2009: 128)

speaker is, that does not diminish his pragmatic perception of the language. Normand

is an active idealist precisely because Esperanto has proven its practical value:

> By learning Esperanto it's like getting a world culture … if you learn
> Norwegian or if you learn another language you will be really oriented to one
> specific culture and one country. But this is not the case with Esperanto and
> this is what I appreciate. Because I have spoken Esperanto with people from
> all around the world, and that is really opening my mind, and helping my
> understanding of what is going on in the world and how the world is today.

Esperanto not only connects speakers with others around the world, it makes

conversations more significant. Instead of making small talk with a new

acquaintance, speakers take the opportunity to gain an understanding of a different

way of life:

> It's quite interesting to speak with Esperantists. … Often conversations will be
> – with non-Esperantists – will be about buying a new car, or about sports. …
> Compare with Esperantists who will never speak about this kind of topic. …
> Usually the conversation with Esperantists will be much more interesting and
> completely different than I will speak with my family or friends or relatives. It
> will be completely because of this situation of two people from two cultures
> speaking, trying to explain. (Normand).

For anyone who is interested in a universally useful universal language, and is not

just pursuing some manifestation of an ideal linguistic universality, Esperanto is

really the only choice. Esperanto is self-perpetuating, in that people speak it because

other people speak it. Joshua explains:

> As constructed languages go, … and there have been so many obviously
> invented for the purpose of international communication, Esperanto is the
> only one that really, actually, genuinely works. … There really are people out
> there who are speaking it, and you can learn it and you really can go talk to
> them.

Indeed, if a language's only purpose is to enable international communication, but

there is a pronounced scarcity of speakers, then there is no impetus to learn the

language, and it remains useless.

4.1 Ideology-based reasons to speak Esperanto

Esperanto has more in its favor than its relatively high number of speakers. Despite being initially controversial and often downplayed, the ideology of human brotherhood persists in Esperanto. For Randy, part of what drew him to the language was what he jokingly calls "the 'Peace, Love, and Understanding' side of Esperanto." Similarly, for Joel, "Esperanto's idealistic aspect, goodwill and peace among people, … intercultural and international understanding, … is very important to [his] involvement with Esperanto." Normand, who is perhaps the most idealistic participant, is nonetheless sincerely passionate, and gives a compelling example of how Zamenhof's dream of human fraternity is accomplished through Esperanto. Bringing up recent natural disasters, he explains that, "when you know people around the world you can have a feeling of the whole world, you are caring for what's happening in the rest of the world, … because you may know that it's happening to someone that you know." Indeed, in Joel's opinion, Esperanto's history and sense of community put it above all other constructed languages. For Joel, "wherever I go, and what people from whichever countries I meet, … we always feel like we have something in common right from the get-go, and it bridges a lot of cultural gaps." Other participants echoed this sentiment. In Randy's words:

> We're not our own nationality but … it's almost like there's an automatic friendship when you meet another Esperantist. It's more than an acquaintance. You already feel comfortable with them; you already have this thing in common, and frequently you find out that you have lots of things in common.

Yevgeniya, too, says, "you can just start talking to some person and you don't have to know this person but you feel like this person is your friend, and this person shares

similar interests and has the same mindset." In her study on the Esperanto speech community, Sabine Fiedler explains, "for many speakers, Esperanto is more than simply another foreign language. It is not only an instrument but – on the basis of common cultural consciousness – also a medium of personal identification" (2006: 76). In short, no matter where a fellow Esperantist is from, as Randy puts it, "It's not like they're the foreigner to me, because we're both Esperantists."

There is logic behind the presence of a prevailing outlook among Esperantists. For there to be an interest in a universal language, there has to be an interest in universal communication; for there to be an interest in universal communication, there is likely to be an underlying desire for cultural exchange and universal understanding. Zamenhof's ideals still hold because they are logical motivations for any constituency supporting a universal language movement. Moreover, Esperantists also tend to have similar political perspectives. According to Randy, "many Esperantists are interested in progressive causes – often that's universal." Normand says, "what is interesting with Esperantists is … the proportion of people that are open to new ideas." In a similar vein, Joel explains that the few negative reactions he has received concerning Esperanto have come from the opposite side of the ideological spectrum. "Often times those who are more to the political right, or religious right, let's say, … have a more negative opinion of it, think it's unnatural or something linked to, I don't know, some kind of hippy thing or socialistic or against God in that it's against Babel." Indeed, some among the politically conservative, or those for whom allegiance to America precludes global citizenship, actively oppose

the idea of Esperanto education.[30,31] Again, a preexisting political ideology that

supports globalism predisposes people to support Esperanto and generates a

commonality among speakers.

This same global consideration is appealed to by what Esperanto

communicates metalinguistically. Normand finds value in the culturally umarked

quality of Esperanto.

> A world language that is neutral, … is important because my first identity is
> not an English identity but a French one. So if I travel with English I just feel
> that I don't travel with a neutral language. Even with French if I go to …
> Africa, … because of the past history of colonies … and so on – what I want
> to say is that I just feel that with Esperanto when I travel with Esperanto and
> meet other Esperantists I feel that I really can speak on a more equal basis.
> Both did an effort of learning a new language, of not using our own language
> … I like the idea of both of us being more on an equal level.

In theory, Esperanto is free of connotations of privilege and of the historic baggage of

many dominant world languages. Certainly, when someone is already a native

speaker of a dominant world language, the decision to speak Esperanto intimates an

acknowledgement of linguistic privilege and effort to redress iniquity. Jerry takes this

idea further:

> English is, I find, a good language for confusing people. … And because it's a
> good language for confusing, it's a good language for selling, or for politics,

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[30] Glenn Beck and conservative bloggers have taken to accusing people of being Esperanto speakers as a way to tarnish their image. On November 10, 2010, Beck ran a program denouncing George Soros, claiming, "His father was big in Esperanza [sic]," and calling Esperanto and its supporters "global government in a different way" (Beck).

[31] After Change.org, a progressive Internet petition host, revealed the petition "Obama, introduce Esperanto as a Second Language subject in schools" as a finalist in its 2010 Ideas For Change in America competition, bloggers ran with the information. Satire blogger That's Right Nate reported, "a large part of Obama's education stimulus is designated for Esperanto instruction in the public schools," calling it "Obama's most insidious attempt at creating a facist [sic] world state–controlling our very thoughts by controlling the words that we can use to express ourselves" (Thatsrightnate). That's Right Nate's report was then circulated out of context by other blogs and discussion boards, generating conservative outcry. Notalemming, writing for YourDaddy.net, argues against the implementation of Esperanto education, saying, "I don't know about you but I am a citizen of the Sovereign United States of America. It is a country in the world. I do not elect or answer to any 'World Leaders' so I am not a 'citizen of the world' nor do I want to be" (Notalemming).

or for lying. Those are all the same, anyway, but the ambiguity of English and the range of abilities in English speakers allow you to intimidate people who don't have the command of language that you have. … If you're a high-level language user and can use the language kind of as a weapon or a bludgeon on them. So, English is pretty good for that, I think, for intimidating rather than for persuading. [With] other languages that have refined their vocabulary more, like Esperanto and Ido, … it's easier to have logical discussions in them. Discussions where heat and passion don't come up so quickly as they do in English debates and discussions.

If English were the universal language, it would privilege native speakers. For those seeking respectful exchange, Esperanto is preferred over other available language options.

4.2 Practical attractions to Esperanto

The magnanimous implications of international Esperanto communication are not necessarily a part of the daily Esperanto experience. A more basic thing that attracts people to Esperanto is its logicality, both in regard to the idea and with respect to its structure. When Helm first encountered the idea of Esperanto at the age of 13, he "thought that it was logical. … Why shouldn't everybody have a second language to speak? … It was far easier than English, where you have to learn to spell every new word you learn, basically, … Esperanto … was like a crossword puzzle." This perception of Esperanto as a game or puzzle is not uncommon. When Zamenhof began to disseminate the language, "he suggested that people test the language by writing to a friend in a foreign land, enclosing a small leaflet with the translations of a few roots and affixes, and leaving it up to the recipient to make sense of it" (Okrent 2009: 103). In showing that with just a small gloss someone could decode an entire message, he demonstrated the logical simplicity of the language. stevo, too, was

"fascinated by the tinker-toy structure of the language, mostly. Any word that could be created was valid, as long as it was meaningful." According to Jerry, Esperanto is superficially attractive those who seek an intellectual challenge:

> I'd be willing to bet that in the constructed language community there are far more cases of autism than there are in the general community. People who have some personality and communication strengths that the general community lacks and that are not appreciated. … The fact that it's just a mental challenge, something to do with their unoccupied brains, you know, there's just not enough interesting stuff going on these days to keep you fully occupied if you have a real active brain. So, people get into constructed languages or mathematics or something … a solitary pursuit in spite of the fact that it's a social activity.

It might seem like Esperanto and the sociocultural opportunities it offers would be the perfect gateway for someone who finds the outside world insufficiently stimulating, but for some speakers, learning Esperanto is sometimes just one more accomplishment to add to the list before turning to the next hurdle. "It's a matter of personal development, personal pride, to accomplish some level of fluency in languages" (Jerry). Jerry acknowledges, "there's a big gap between the intent, the golden dream;" not everyone who learns Esperanto does it because of its ideals. Esperanto appeals to more than just idealists. It appeals to those who think that language would be helped by being simplified, and to those who just want an intellectual exercise.

Another benefit of Esperanto, often reported by proponents of the language, is that having studied it makes other languages easier to learn. For Will, this was one of his motivations to study Esperanto:

> I was starting a program in which I was studying Japanese cinema, but in addition to Japanese cinema the language as well, and I hadn't studied a language in a long time, and so the idea of picking up Esperanto as kind of a practice language was appealing to me. One of the things the student in our

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class who spoke Esperanto had talked about was that learning Esperanto … makes learning other languages easier, and I had struggled with Spanish in high school.

Retrospectively, Will confirms that having studied Esperanto had a positive effect on his subsequent study of Japanese:

> To a certain extent it allowed a sense of flexibility in thinking about how to express something, which was helpful in Japanese. So, even just breaking out of the idea that … learning a language is learning new words. Really, it's learning new words but it's also learning new ways of putting words together, ways of kind of thinking about expression. … So that was helpful, to a certain extent.

Joel who, after moving to Canada, decided to study French with his wife, expressed the impact of having a pre-existing knowledge of Esperanto:

> It had an enormous impact, especially on learning vocabulary. … I can't imagine making that kind of progress if I didn't have Esperanto as a basis. Because, of course, English helps with certain French words, but Esperanto filled in the rest. For example, … the French word for mouth, bouche – that's buŝo in Esperanto. I would have had a harder time learning that word if I didn't already know the Esperanto word. So it helped a lot. And I think Esperanto helps a lot with language learning in general, because it gives you a good basis. It certainly helped me, learning other languages, but I think especially French because of the vocabulary.

Because of Esperanto's largely Latin-based lexicon, its helpfulness for learning languages like French, which have a surface similarity to Esperanto, is to be expected. However, as Will experienced, Esperanto is also helpful for studying non-Latinate languages because it exposes a speaker to different grammatical structures. Taking into consideration that many members of the Esperanto speech community speak an unusually high number of natural languages, and that at least a few of those are usually acquired before studying Esperanto, it could just be that most Esperanto speakers have a natural ability for language learning. Nevertheless, as Will mentioned, he struggled with Spanish and, though he studied it and Japanese and

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American Sign Language, Esperanto is the only one of his non-native languages with which he is "very comfortable," "comfortable essentially living in the language."[32] So, even for those not predisposed for language acquisition, Esperanto is learnable and can help future attempts to learn a natural language.

It is not unusual for multilingual people to say that in different contexts they find one language better suited for expression than another, and this phenomenon is not exclusive to natural languages. Participants were asked whether they had ever experienced this with Esperanto, not because of fluency but because of some quality of the language. Yevgeniya reveals, "sometimes it's easier for me to express myself in Esperanto than in, I would say, English, French, or even Russian," Russian being one of her native languages. Other participants mention an increased precision with Esperanto. Randy speaks to the question at hand, saying, "in general I feel more flexibility in Esperanto because of its agglutinative nature. You know, there are these prefixes and suffixes that can be mixed and matched infinitely. You can often be very precise in a very concise manner in Esperanto." Joel expresses a similar feeling, saying "I've definitely had that feeling that I can express myself better in Esperanto in many situations. Especially, the flexibility of the language allows me to more precisely express myself. English is my native language but you have to follow certain patterns for set expressions." Jim explains:

> Most of the things that are easier to express in Esperanto or easier to talk
> about in Esperanto, I would say … with few exceptions it's not going to be
> with words that Esperanto has that are lacking in English, but concise

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[32] Will is not the only Esperanto speaker who has achieved higher fluency and comfort in Esperanto than in other languages. "Almost 18% of the respondents in Rašic's survey reported 'feeling as comfortable in Esperanto as their mother tongue,' 11.54% felt a 'bit less natural than in other foreign languages,' and 43.59% reported 'feeling more secure than in other foreign languages'" (Fiedler 2006: 77).

compounds that Esperanto can come up with that English cannot express as concisely. … For instance, the Esperanto compound "aliĝilo" corresponding to English "registration form", it's a very concise and elegant way of expressing that concept. … There are a number of nifty constructions like that, … compounds formed purely of a few prefixes and suffixes and prepositions and the like, that express something that it takes several words to say in English.

It is not so much that Esperanto is lexically or structurally superior in some particular category of expression; it is just that there are some things it can do that other languages cannot.

Esperanto's history of producing literature persists, and reading is one of the most frequent, quotidian uses of Esperanto. Randy uses Esperanto for written communication, subscribes to some digital Esperanto publications, and even has a personal library of Esperanto books. Randy says:

I use it on a regular basis. I would say every day, but not necessarily *every* day, but I use it day to day. Most of that use is over the Internet, reading articles and posting to discussion groups and sending and reading e-mails in Esperanto. … Most of it is things related to Esperantists or the Esperanto movement, and therefore is only in Esperanto, but sometimes I read things in Esperanto for fun, even that are available in English or in German. … *Le Monde Diplomatique*, has a website in Esperanto that provides translations of some of their articles. I don't read French, so that gives me an opportunity to read articles about foreign affairs that I wouldn't have access to without Esperanto.

Joshua, too, uses Esperanto to access literature that would not otherwise be available to him. "There's a lot of stuff that's been translated into Esperanto that has not been translated into English. So I've enjoyed a bunch of arcane literature that I probably wouldn't have had access to if I hadn't been a speaker of Esperanto." Similarly, stevo says:

I often read Wikipedia articles, for instance, in several languages, comparing the content across languages. Often topics are especially relevant to speakers of a particular language, so relevant articles in that language tend to be more

detailed than in other languages. I often choose Esperanto (or some other language) over English when the subject is one I already know about in English, but don't know the corresponding terminology in the other language.

He at once learns more about a topic that interests him and expands his vocabulary by cross-referencing texts in different languages. But, of course, there is also an abundance of Esperanto text that is only accessible to Esperanto speakers because it was originally written in Esperanto. Jim, who reads "short stories and poetry fairly often, besides more ephemeral junk like magazines, and websites, web blogs and forum posts and the like," says that "nearly all of what [he is] reading is original." The combination of extensive original literature, a tradition of translation, and the transnationality of translating into Esperanto, grants Esperanto speakers access to an expansive literary collection.

For those looking to travel or experience other cultures, Esperanto is a portal. Normand, who is from Canada, "found that even if [he] could speak three languages [he] needed to learn more" when he went to Europe.

> I was staying in France for a training and I saw a poster saying that they were offering Esperanto courses and I never heard of it before so I went there and they explained that with this language you can travel around the world. And so I really liked the idea of learning a language that is spoken around the world. So that's how I get into Esperanto, just because … I wanted to travel and be able to speak with the people in many countries.

Zdravka explains that for her, "it was the language to better knew [sic] the other culture, so I never feel a stranger in some country because when I went somewhere I visit Esperantists in this country." For Tatyana, Esperanto was a window to the rest of the world. "It was very good language when in Soviet Union, when we had no access to the information, and we could contact with people. We could speak and then we could know something about the other countries." "In the Soviet time it was the only

way of seeing the Civil War out of the revolution" (Tatyana). For Normand, Zdravka, and others, Esperanto is a means for a richer leisure experience. For Tatyana, knowing Esperanto yielded access to censored perspectives.

The extended Esperanto network provides opportunities for world travel and international cultural exchange, and Esperanto speakers often take advantage of its widespread social opportunities. Helm talks of his own experience with Esperanto over the last six decades:

> I've had the opportunity to meet people from different countries where I have learned about things that I didn't know. … Nowadays when there is Skype I can use [Esperanto] every day if I want to. I mean, I have some contacts here, in Japan, and in Poland, and in Russia, and in Brazil … they are different Esperantists. It's funny to speak to them and so on, and video chat a little every day.

Zdravka has also had a remarkable number of travel opportunities because of Esperanto. "Three students from [Hungary] came to Croatia because I lived in this time in Croatia, and one of the students stay in my home for the weekend, … then if I like I can visit her in Budapest in [Hungary]. … It was my first trip without my parents." With this friend and others, Zdravka began a correspondence, exchanging "postcard[s] or the little things that it was possible to send." Later in life, working as an Esperanto teacher:

> I started many activities for Esperanto, for the children in the elementary school. Every year I give Esperanto course and on the end of the school year I went with the children to some countries to meet other people, other children from another country. For example, I went with 10 young people … and we met them for one week in Hungary. Another year it was one week in the Italy, to meet the children from elementary school in Italy. And one year it was in Grande Bretagne, faraway of the London, in Chester, it was a little town in the north of London. … In '79 I visit the Japan for three months. And in these three months I sleep only two or three nights in the hotel. … One month I slept in Tokyo in Esperanto club, and the rest I visit the Esperantists from the north, from Hokkaido, from Sapporo, to the Kagoshima.

Normand says, "with Esperanto there's really lots of solidarity, Esperantists helping

other Esperantists while they are traveling." He reminisces about one particular trip,

to Korea in 1994:

> It was really unique because … in Canada, we don't know much about Korea,
> … and not too many Canadians have traveled to Korea. So for me it was
> really opening myself to completely new culture and, … you can really speak,
> not only with hotel clerk or tourist agent or so on, but you can really speak
> with Koreans using Esperanto and so you can really ask about their life about
> all kind of many, many things.

Randy makes a point of connecting with Esperanto speakers whenever possible, and

makes even business travel a more personal and memorable experience:

> Any time that I travel out of state I try and use Esperanto. So sometimes I
> might even be traveling to St. Louis for work for example, but if I know a
> local Esperantist there in St. Louis I would try and meet up with them. And
> there have been times that I have just taken a vacation in Europe, not to go to
> any conference or anything, but I've still made an effort to try and meet up
> with Esperantists there. And I use the Pasporto Servo frequently when I travel
> overseas.

Pasporta Servo, an Esperanto-based service from which Couch Surfing is derived,

connects Esperanto-speaking travelers with possible hosts around the world. After

college, Joshua "travel[ed] in central Europe and stayed with a bunch of people with a

friend of [his] via Pasporta Servo." Jim is a more active member of Pasporta Servo:

> I've hosted international visitors from various countries as part of a Pasporta
> Servo and … in other contexts. Sometimes hosting in my apartment or house,
> and sometimes just showing them around Atlanta to see the sights when they
> are staying in a hotel or otherwise. I've showed around or hosted guests from
> Japan, Belgium, Mongolia, Slovenia.

Pasporta Servo condenses the grand scheme of Esperanto down to a one-on-one level,

enabling complete strangers to come together and share their daily lives,

environment, and culture.

4.3 More than friendship

The power of the pre-existing undercurrent of community among Esperanto

speakers often manifests into lasting relationships once Esperanto speakers meet.

According to Normand, Esperanto "gives you the opportunity to make friends around

the world," and in fact he jokingly complains:

> I feel that I have too many friends now! … I mean, I know so many people around the world and I just don't have enough time, … to be in contact with them, and to write to them, … When I have a chance to go to Europe, and to see them, I'm always so happy and excited to see friends I haven't seen for maybe five years, sometimes more than that.

But Esperanto has given Normand and many others more than just lasting friendship;

it has been the source of companionship. Will, who uses Esperanto daily for reading

as well as communication, says:

> My most frequent use of the language would be with my girlfriend. I actually met her at the course in California and so we use the language together every day. I'd say we speak English more frequently, but it's pretty rare that a day would go by where we wouldn't have some manner of exchange in Esperanto.

For Normand and Zdravka, it brought them together:

> I met a girl, from Croatia, … during the Youth Convention, so we kept on writing letters to each other and so I decided to move, first to go to Croatia – at that time it was Yugoslavia – to visit her and I decided to stay for a while and then we got married. … So we were an international couple and using Esperanto on a daily basis because, … really the only common language between us was Esperanto (Normand).

Though both have subsequently studied each other's native language, they continue to

speak Esperanto at home and raised two children as native speakers. Tatyana, too, has

"an Esperanto family":

> My husband also speaks Esperanto, and we get [sic] acquainted grace to Esperanto, twenty years ago in one of the congresses … I met him in the

congress and he was from Kazakhstan, that's only Esperanto which allowed us to get in touch and to meet each other. Both of us spoke Russian but … there wouldn't be any occasion to meet each other, but Esperanto.

Yevgeniya laughingly says:

My mother once told me that she advised me to spend my time more productively by learning English, but … this is actually how I met my husband because we applied for the same job, as an editor of [an Esperanto] magazine. So, Esperanto not only gave me a part time job that I could hold for five and a half years, but my family, my husband.

Finding one's spouse – or temporary romance – via Esperanto is common enough for there to be an in-joke among Esperantists. The words "Esperanto-edzperanto" loosely translate as "Esperanto matchmaker," and refer to Esperanto itself as a matchmaker that brings people together (Fiedler 2006: 82).

4.4 The congress effect

Esperanto congresses are perhaps one of the most measurable and public manifestations of Esperanto culture and tradition. For many speakers, the first large-scale congress attended is an unforgettable experience that legitimizes their investment and cements their commitment the Esperanto speech community. Esperanto congresses, sometimes called conferences or conventions, take place at many levels: regional congresses within one country; regional congresses bridging multiple countries, like the Northeast United States and Southeast Canada; national congresses; and world or global congresses. There are also international seminars, courses, and social gatherings. Zdravka's first congress was the 1970 Esperanto Youth Congress in Graz, Austria:

For me, it was incredible then, the young people from the twenty-five or forty different countries, they can understand between, only by one language, …

And so in this week we songs the Esperanto in Esperanto we dance the music it was in Esperanto, all things was in Esperanto.

Yevgeniya describes her first international seminar as "just such an extraordinary experience":

It was the first international event that I ever attended, and for me it was really an eye-opener how people from so many countries, so many cultures, can just come together between language, understand each other, and how we can feel belonging to the same community, to the same, you know, to the same humanity, that we are just so much alike even though we come from different cultures. And of course, when you participate in larger conventions, such as World Esperanto Conventions, sometimes it just gives you, you know, chills, because 2000 people in the same room that have something in common, the same language, it's really amazing.

Here Joel interjected, "—that speak the same language by choice," to which Yevgeniya agreed. At a congress, participants can finally witness the number and diversity of Esperanto speakers. They have interpersonal access to people with whom they could not communicate if it weren't for their mutual study of Esperanto, confirming the worth of their invested time. Participants can engage in the cultural exchange central to Esperanto ideals, and discover first-hand the commonalities between speakers. At congresses, Esperanto fulfills its promises.

For some attendees, congresses or seminars are their first major exposure to highly fluent speakers, and the immersion significantly advances their fluency. Though Joshua tried to attend local Esperanto meetings, "the guys who were in the Esperanto club that I went to in Berkeley were all much much older than me and … had really strong American accents, … so it just sort of seemed like that wasn't a resource." Jorge complained that in his local club, "all members were old and very proud. They didn't know much but pretended they did," and so he "had a problem there." Normand did not even have the option of attending local Esperanto meetings:

First I took a course, a night course, and then I moved to the southern France, and over there, there was no Esperanto club or group, so I kept on studying on my own with books and so on and a year after, more or less, I went to Scandinavia to take part in World Esperanto Youth Congress, and I was not that fluent but it's really an experience to be [immersed] in an environment where 300 young people around you speak constantly and only in Esperanto. So I really had to learn.

Jim also experienced a turning point in his Esperanto fluency when he attended an immersion course:

The first couple of years of our local Esperanto group there were two fluent speakers in the group, and then a large number of beginners, relatively. … At that point most of the conversation was in English. I would … occasionally get a chance to hear the more fluent speakers talking in Esperanto between themselves, but the rest of us were not advanced enough to really carry on a conversation. … [At] the immersion course in San Francisco, … there was a larger number at the intermediate level, … and also a large number of really fluent speakers, and there was a lot of, I don't know, pressure I guess, to use Esperanto exclusively. Really within hours I was speaking Esperanto more and better than I had been during our local Esperanto meetings in Atlanta. And within days I was reasonably fluent, and really fluent … by the end of three weeks.

Esperanto congresses are beneficial to speech-community building as much because of the sense of community they cultivate as because they are a powerful learning experience for participants.

Every year congresses take place in a different city, and of course every year there are different participants, so people attend as many as are within their means. Tatyana says, "I can say without exaggeration that I visited 10 congresses. Not international but in our country. As for international, I visited 3 congresses." Randy is another frequent attendee:

With maybe three or four exceptions, I have been to either a US Esperanto Conference or World Esperanto Conference every year since 1992. So, that's maybe 16 altogether, maybe five of those were World Esperanto Conferences and 11 of those were US Esperanto Conferences.

Jim, too, attends congresses whenever possible:

> I've been to probably seven or eight conventions, mostly North American conventions, and one regional convention here in the Southeast. … And I've helped organize some of them. … The number of attendees has ranged in my experience in the last ten or twelve years from as low as just over fifty to a high in the mid-hundreds or the high-hundreds. The largest number I think was probably two or three years ago when it coincided with the Pan-American Convention; it was in Montreal. There have also been conventions with a little over one hundred people in a couple of different US cities in recent years. US conventions tend to draw fewer people than Canadian conventions because it's harder for international Esperanto speakers to get visit visas to visit the US than to visit Canada.

Joel, who is the Executive Administrator for the Esperantic Studies Association, has attended conventions at a variety of levels, and has also helped to organize some:

> My first international convention was in 1998. Actually, it was my first, my first trip outside of the country. … I've been to three or four, I can't remember, international youth conventions. One in Hungary, in Russia, in Sweden, and also smaller conventions in the United States: Atlanta; Austin, Texas. I helped organize the one in Atlanta. New York. I've been to two conventions in Montreal. One was the North American Convention in 1998 and in 2008 was the Pan-American convention, which is all people from North and South America. … [Attendance] varies greatly according to the event and also where the event is held, but average attendance at a world convention, the ones that I've been to, has been about 2000 people, sometimes more, sometimes less. … The attendance tends to be higher in Europe and lower in other parts of the world because of travel expenses. At international youth conferences, I think the largest one was in Hungary, for me at least. It had about 500 people. Others have been much lower, about 300 on average. For United States conventions usually [are] about 100, maybe 200 at the most.

Like Jim and Joel above, other participants have helped organize congresses and Esperanto events. In 1979, Zdravka organized a congress in Japan, contacting and inviting Esperanto speakers in Africa and Asia. "I was the people's choice … to be in the committee for the young – it was for organizate [sic] the Esperanto congress, yes? And I was in this committee but responsible for the people they speak Esperanto in

Asia and Africa." Normand helped organize the World Esperanto Youth Convention

in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, he stayed with an Esperanto family there:

> It was again a really unique experience because I was staying with him and with his family so I got to know really, the life from inside, living in a Hong Kong family and getting to organize an international convention with all the difficulties and the problems, you know, that represent. … I will remember this for my life, for my whole life.

Normand repeatedly states that he has "received a lot from the movement," and has

"been really active over the past more than 20 years organizing things and courses …

to give back to the movement." He contributes to the organization of "the All-

America, or the American, Esperanto convention, the Canadian Esperanto

convention, … also Esperanto weekends so that Canadians and Americans can meet."

Normand is the current president of the Quebec Esperanto Society:

> We organize two weekends, yearly. … One [is] a long weekend in May, so we call it Micaro, … the Middle Canada Esperanto Weekend. And it's mainly for participants from Ontario and Quebec, so we meet one year in Ontario and the second year in Quebec and so on. … Usually we are between 40 to 50 participants, from, let's say 16, 17 years old, up to 70 years old, … some are students; some are retired people. So we call it the Esperanto Friendly Weekend because the purpose of this weekend is not to take part and do Esperanto lesson or lecture; it's really to practice Esperanto while visiting a city. So local Esperantists will give a guided tour of the city and then we will visit together museums, we will translate the information in our head. So it's really to get something in this city, so at the same time we learn lots of new words and get to know people from other cities … So that's the Spring Weekend, and the Fall Weekend is always in United States. … It's in New York State; it's near Lake George. … Again, it's to attend as many courses and lecture but also for activities such as hiking, canoeing and so on, and everything is in Esperanto. And usually there's … roughly 50 participants from Northeast America, or from Eastern part of Canada. Also sometimes people, one or two participants are from Europe or even sometimes from Seattle or California. But most of the participants are from Quebec and New England.

In addition to the organizational work mentioned previously, Jim recounts another

facet of Joel's efforts. After joining what is now known as Esperanto USA, Jim "read

in one of the first newsletters … that there was someone here in Atlanta starting a local Esperanto group" – it was Joel.

4.5 Esperanto for the blind

Tatyana's personal Esperanto story is not unusual. She is not the only blind Esperanto speaker. She is not the only person to have benefited through membership in the speech community. I focus on her story because her interview fortuitously reveals the presence of the community of blind speakers, and because she shares so much about what she gained through Esperanto.

Tatyana, who has a lifelong interest in language, was often frustrated by the limited language-learning resources available in Braille. She believes that this is part of why there are many blind Esperanto speakers:

> It's difficult for blind person to study foreign language. … before [computers] it was very more difficult. For example, I began to study a lot of languages but I abandoned them because there was no literature. For example, I began to study Czech and I studied and after that I abandoned it because I had no dictionaries. As for Esperanto dictionaries, I had them.

Once she learned Esperanto, Tatyana found many ways to use it individually and with others. "There is [sic] a lot of magazines of Braille, magazines in Esperanto, books. And I have had a lot of friends whom I could write in Braille" (Tatyana). For blind Esperanto speakers, just as for anyone else, Esperanto expands the possibilities of an individual's social circle. "There are a lot of blind Esperantists, especially middle aged, … from 40 'til 70 I think. A lot of blind people know Esperanto and they like it. They have contacts" (Tatyana). There are enough blind Esperanto speakers that, "the

common feeling is now, among the not so intelligent people, that Esperanto is the

language of the blind." She says:

> Certainly, I had the reaction when people say "Ah, blind person, she has nothing to do so she studies Esperanto." When there was an article about me in the local newspaper, and there was a photo and I was recognized by the people, … the people say "Ah, this blind which studies Esperanto. What's Esperanto? I don't know; it's something for blind."

There are even enough blind Esperanto speakers for them to have their own

congresses, and "two years ago [Tatyana] visited the congress in Muszyna, it was in

Poland, the congress for the blind" (Tatyana). Still, that does not mean that blind

Esperanto speakers are an isolated subset within the community. Tatyana has also

attended several national and international congresses.

Esperanto also gave Tatyana access to technology that she might not have

otherwise had:

> Grace to Esperanto I am the first user of computer in Ukraine. … I am blind, so it was difficult for me to use computer, but Esperantist from Italy helped me to study … I began to use computer in 1995. There was no materials in Russian. I didn't know what is it, how blind people can use the computer, and I began to study with him. He helped me, and I got the job after that. … Esperanto in fact helped me survive … the difficult situation in the Ukraine in the 90s. And after that I began to study foreign languages via Esperanto.

With current technology, the availability of Braille texts is less crucial because

computers can read texts aloud, but Esperanto still feeds Tatyana's language interests:

> I began to study foreign languages via Esperanto. It's very interesting. For example, I am a devoted student of [Helm]. He teaches me English now and began to teach me Swedish, via Esperanto. … [Helm] make me to interested in Interlingua. And before acquainted with [Helm] I had tried to study Ido but unfortunately it was during the Soviet times so I studied the language but I didn't find something to read and I forgot the language.

Helm and Tatyana communicate regularly through Skype, for friendly conversation

and for Helm to teach Tatyana languages.

4.6 Unexpected benefits

While most of Esperanto's practicality comes when speakers intentionally seek ways to use it, it can also have unexpected benefits. Jerry had "just a bit of luck" because of Esperanto:

> I left college and joined the army, wound up at the army language school, the defense language institute, and there became a Russian interpreter/translator. When I took the test for the language ability to apply for the school, much to my surprise the test was actually written in a variant of Esperanto and since I had just come from my college studying it, I maximized the test and got a top score.

Joshua talks of his own unexpected Esperanto moments:

> Very occasionally, Esperanto has come up, just at random, as a shared language in a situation where we didn't have a different language in common. On my honeymoon in Italy I was staying in little hostel on this island that turned out that the proprietor was an Esperanto speaker, which made it much easier for us to communicate, but it's very rare for that to happen. … Once in a while, say, transacting with people on the web if I'm buying books in some other country it turns out that the person's a speaker of Esperanto and we're able to communicate that way.

This, though rare, is a truer testament to Esperanto, in that it is international enough to be useful when outside of a predetermined Esperanto setting.

Chapter 5:
Esperantist Objectives

5.1 Attracting new speakers

It is not required that members of the speech community actively promote the language, but the propagation of Esperanto is certainly fundamental to its origins, and increasing its speakers is valuable – even for the most pragmatic members of the community – because it increases the scope of its practical application. Joel, who actively seeks to propagate the language, expresses frustration with what he perceives to be a side effect of people studying Esperanto via the Internet:

> I think it's regrettable that a lot of these people … who learn online, never take the next step, … actually going to an event and meeting people face to face or joining an organization and supporting Esperanto activities. Because, to build the Esperanto community, as it is today, in generations past people joined an organization. They contributed. They volunteered. They all participated in building it up. But some of these people just kind of passively learn it online and don't take the next step. … They're consuming and not contributing.

Esperanto's utility is not limited to spoken communication, and people who do not attend events can nonetheless be active in the community, but Esperanto is supposed to connect people. If someone learns Esperanto and remains in isolation, not using it with other speakers, the net effect on the community is minimal. The new would-be Esperanto speaker would be more aptly described as an Esperanto knower.

Joel's description of Esperanto learners who "never take the next step" as non-reciprocating consumers ties in to others' perceptions of language being akin to a product. By Ferrucio Rossi-Landi's definition of a speech community, "linguistic forms and contents used by members of a community have a value just like goods have values in the context of a market. … As articles of consumption, words … presuppose a worldview just like commodities presuppose certain desires in the potential users" (Duranti 1997: 82). This perception is particularly relevant in the case of L_2 language acquisition, which comes out of necessity, interest, or a combination of the two. With a constructed language, it is easy to argue that acquisition is never intrinsically necessary, in which case the language must have some other value to attract potential speakers – and keep them interested enough to learn it and then use it. With this reasoning, there must be a preexisting commonality among Esperanto speakers that draws them to it; they have certain desires that the commodity of Esperanto fulfills.

Jerry, a former Esperantist and current President of the North American Ido Association, has come to see language in a similar light when contemplating how to expand the language community he is charged with organizing. Jerry sees any constructed language as a product that needs to be marketed.

If we could, for instance, put together a project which would convince teenagers that Ido or any other constructed language was a high ideal communication mode to give them a secret language, a texting language that their parents and teachers would not be able to understand, I think then we'd have good beachhead for development. … Or get a rock star, a rap star to start using a language, you know, something like that, a kind of celebrity hook. The old ways of promoting language, … no longer apply in the modern world and the language developers and proponents of the languages have not really adapted to the new conditions.

In his opinion:

One thing that … any of the constructed languages needs but does not have is some compelling economic purposes. We have yet to come up with some kind of business or service or organization or education, something, which has to be conducted in the language itself, and would compel people to learn the language to get it. I can't think of any, and I have spent years trying to come up with one.

This intersects with Randy's belief that languages like Esperanto are sometimes looked down on, particularly by Americans, for having no economic backing or purpose. He says:

In general Americans don't tend to learn a lot of languages, so you're already in … a different category, if you have an interest in foreign languages. And then, since it is not a national language, since it does not have a big economy behind it, people do tend to think that's odd, if you have an interest in Esperanto, not just a passing understanding of it.

Acquiring any language requires time, and especially in the United States, where the prevailing opinion is that time is money, most potential speakers need the motivation of a specific benefit in order to undertake such an endeavor. This evaluation of the constructed language's situation is interesting in that it resembles analyses regarding endangered languages. When a language is no longer economically viable because an incoming language is perceived as the language of opportunity, people stop preserving their original language. In the case of constructed languages, opponents

might say that they provide no exclusive opportunity, and therefore are not worth learning.

For Esperanto to prosper, it needs to be needed. In the United States it has several stumbling blocks. English is enjoying a period as a national universal language in vogue[33]. This perpetuates the prevalent expectation that everyone else should learn English while there is no need for Americans to make any effort to expand their own linguistic capacity. Furthermore, the United States has a long tradition of English-only movements and legislation[34]. Additionally, the United States borders only two countries, whose geographic distance from most of the US population minimizes interlinguistic confrontations for most residents. Earlier, Normand described how it was not until he lived in Europe and "wanted to travel and be able to speak with the people in many countries" that he realized that though he was already multilingual, learning one universal language was much more feasible than trying to learn the language of every country he might visit. For an American, or in the above case, a Canadian, a handful of languages will seem like enough or perhaps even excessive unless he or she is put in a situation that makes the need for more unquestionable. Obviously, the United States' unfavorable linguo-geographic conditions cannot be changed in order to cultivate a desire for an auxiliary language. So, perhaps, as Jerry believes, especially within the capitalist American mindset, the only way for an auxiliary language to take off for it to become economically essential.

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[33] Within the last hundred years, this has shifted from French to Russian to English. For more on languages of power and their instability and unpredictability, see Chapter 1, Section 3, pages 19-24 of *One language for the world* by Mario Pei.

[34] See also Edwin L. Battistella's "Bad Language – Bad Citizens" for a history of English-only movements in the United States.

5.2 Teaching Esperanto

If we see language like any other cultural facet or tradition, the best way for it

to persist within the speech community is for it to be passed on through the

generations. But, raising native Esperanto speakers brings up issues, specifically, with

regard to the individual benefits from early exposure and effects on the Esperanto

community. The conflict over raising native Esperanto speakers comes from the

perceived value of native Esperanto speakers. While they increase the sheer number

of speakers, which seems positive on the surface level, their effect may be more

detrimental. Helm reflects on native Esperanto speakers he has encountered:

> There are Esperantists who have learned Esperanto because their parents are
> from different countries, so they grew up with the language, but it is a little bit
> peculiar because I have never seen that these native speakers are some kind of
> a model as they would be in English. … If you don't know what is correct as
> far as English goes, then you will ask a native English speaker, "What is the
> correct thing here to use?" But in Esperanto you will study the grammar and
> the literature to try to find out.

Joshua takes this idea further:

> In linguistics of natural languages, the way to find out … the right form,
> obviously, is to go find somebody who speaks it and ask them. And with
> Esperanto it's really not that way, because folks who are learning it from birth
> are doing all kinds of innovation, … so the native speaker intuition of an
> Esperantist from birth is *not necessarily valuable or meaningful at all* to the
> Esperanto community at large. So it almost seems like raising a child speaking
> Esperanto is kind of going against the purposes of the language or something.
> (Emphasis added.)

Joshua concludes, decidedly, "it's really intended to be second language; it's not

intended to be first language." Part of the problem is that native speakers tend to

innovate within a language, changing the rules, dropping grammatical complexities,

and, from an Esperanto perspective, implementing the havoc of a natural

language[35,36]. For Esperanto to be globally useful, it must remain constant and devoid of regionalisms, and this appears to be largely possible because of its lack of native speakers. So, how can the language be widely perpetuated while remaining unchanged? Presenting yet another potential drawback, Normand describes the attitudes of his children, native Esperanto speakers:

> For them it's … just another language. They are fluent now in four languages, because they are good also in English, so for them languages are languages; you use them when you need them. So they don't feel they need to be Esperanto or to do some things to promote Esperanto or to take part because it's a different situation. … They are not active as we are.

More speakers may increase the scope of Esperanto's utility, but if native speakers are likely to be apathetic to the movement[37], how much do they really contribute? It seems as though people should *not* speak it at home, that they should *not* speak it with their friends and family; that it should only be spoken when there is no other choice.

Despite participants' prevalent indecision if not total opposition regarding raising native Esperanto speakers, the practice is fairly common within the Esperanto community at large. "The phenomenon is known in the Esperanto community as *denaskismo*: 'from-birth-ism', … producing *denaskaj esperantistoj* or simply *denaskuloj* ('native' Esperanto speakers)" (Corsetti 1996: 264). Newsletters, annual global gatherings, and more recently, Internet discussion lists support and connect developing Esperanto families. At the time of writing, Corsetti extrapolates from previous counts that there are 350 families, "in which Esperanto is spoken between at

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[35] See "Regularizing the regular: The phenomenon of overregularization in Esperanto-speaking children," by Renato Corsetti, Maria Antonietta Pinto, and Maria Tolomeo.

[36] See also Juoko Lindstedt's "Native Esperanto as a Test Case for Natural Language"

[37] This should not be taken as a universal consequence. Okrent describes Kimo, a native speaker of Esperanto who leads an Esperanto rock band, regularly attends and lectures at congresses, and is raising a second-generation native-speaking son (82-84).

least two members as the chief language for every kind of communication," but he "would not be surprised if the real number proved to be around one thousand, because every day new families appear from nowhere" (1996: 265). Corsetti claims, "every dedicated Esperantist at least tries for some time to speak in Esperanto to his children, and in many cases he succeeds" (1996: 265). Despite common assumptions, according to Corsetti, of the 350 confirmed Esperanto families, "at least two thirds consist of partners of the same nationality living in their native country," rather than consisting of two partners from two different nationalities. This proportion is significant because it indicates that Esperanto families are forming by choice rather than by necessity. This is supported by the data gathered in this study. Five of the research participants are in a relationship with another Esperanto speaker and use Esperanto as a home language. All of them have at least one common national language, though some learned their common language as a result of living together in a country where that language is spoken, but they choose to continue to use Esperanto in the home.

Corsetti, who himself has an Esperanto family, presents some of the issues faced by those attempting to raise Esperanto-speaking children. One key issue, he says, is gender:

> For the most part only fathers speak Esperanto to the children, while the mothers speak the local language or a third language. … It is well established that the father is the "weak" element in passing on a language, mainly because he tends to spend less time with the children. Another concern is the kind of language which fathers tend to use with the children: "fatherese" tends to be different from "motherese" (1996: 266).

This is certainly an issue if, as in the United States, speakers who might desire to pass Esperanto on to their children are predominantly male. Joshua's wife has "gotten a

30-minute crash course and was not bad by the end of it, but doesn't speak it at all."

Jerry's wife speaks neither Ido nor Esperanto, and he says, "she referred to [his]

constructed language, Loijo, as 'Flamingo', so she's … not really up on these things.

She considers it something that [he] do[es]." Helm is an interesting case. His current

partner does speak Esperanto, and in fact is responsible for awakening his long-

dormant interest in the language. However, Helm's children are from a previous

marriage, and they do not speak Esperanto:

> I have had an earlier marriage and then I had children in that, but they were
> Polish and Swedish and I didn't teach them Esperanto because I thought that
> they wanted to know their mother's language as well as mine. … It would
> have been another way if my then-wife had been an Esperanto speaker, but
> she was not, so I cannot say that I tried to; … I never thought about it.

For Helm and his first wife, their national languages took precedence, in part because

he was the only one with an interest in Esperanto. For the men above, even if their

partners did not oppose their desire to have Esperanto-speaking children, they would

be linguistically unequipped to contribute to the effort. During the course of the

interview with Zdravka, she revealed:

> I heard before about Esperanto because my father was Esperantist, yes? But I
> don't show many interest in before, but now, … when my professor ask the
> student in the class who like study the Esperanto international language, and
> the most all of my friends said yes, I like it also.

She did not say whether he had tried to teach her the language before, or get her

interested in the movement, but his pre-existing involvement was not enough to

motivate her to learn it.

Will, Joel, and Normand are in relationships with Esperanto-speaking

partners. Will, who is not married, has not yet decided whether he would try to teach

any potential children Esperanto. Joel, who uses Esperanto as the household language

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with his wife, Yevgeniya, thinks that in his case having Esperanto-speaking children

is inevitable:

> I was thinking, early in my Esperanto days, that would be such a great thing to
> do, to have children that are native speakers. But not only is it something that
> I think is a good thing to do, I think … even if you didn't do it, it would
> happen. Because if Mom and Dad speak Esperanto between the two, …
> they're not going to be able to keep children from picking it up. … So yes, I
> can't imagine it otherwise. … One of the languages the children would speak
> would be Esperanto.

Normand and Zdravka are the only ones who have had children and raised them as

native speakers. Zdravka stayed home to raise their children, and taught them to

speak French, Croatian, and Esperanto:

> When came our children, decided then we like speak Esperanto also with our
> children. So, I stay at home, I don't work in this time, and I feel like language
> professor for my children because in the morning when Normand was at home
> we speak Esperanto, but when he went to the work I changed the language
> and I said to my children, "The father is going to the work and we are alone, I
> will speak Croatian." … Then I change the language if my neighbor visit me
> or if we went to the park, I said to my children, … "We will speak French
> now." So in one day I change three languages with to my children.

Zdravka successfully implemented what Corsetti calls the "situational method"

(1996: 269). When raising children bilingually, "the main method followed is 'one

person, one language,'" but for Normand and Zdravka, and other international

Esperanto families, that is often insufficient to cover all of the languages they want

their children to speak.

Another problem that Esperanto families – or families living in a country

where their home language is not widely spoken – face is a lack of resources in the

target language. These resources include children's books, videos, or peers who speak

the same language. Normand and Zdravka tried to counter these problems by seeking

opportunities for their children to interact with other Esperanto speakers of their own

age, but found it challenging as their children grew older.

> We went a couple times in Europe, actually many times in Europe with them,
> so that they can really experiment using Esperanto with other children. Also
> we took part in, in Europe every year there is a family Esperanto gathering,
> for a week, so that many family get together from all over Europe, families
> with children. And they just play together, and there's all kinds of activities in
> Esperanto. … But as they get to be teenagers they don't want to follow their
> parents all the time, and they have friends, friends are quite important, and all
> their friends here do not speak Esperanto. So if you don't have really good
> friends of same age as you are, it's really hard here (Normand).

Normand and Zdravka's children, now in their late 20s, are fluent Esperanto speakers.

Despite the obstacles, Zdravka and Normand succeeded. Still, as Normand explained

earlier, their children's relationship to Esperanto is the same as their relationship to

any one of the four languages that they speak: a practical one.

Among participants who do not have an Esperanto-speaking partner or do not

yet have children, several mention that it is easy enough to learn Esperanto on your

own, so there is no real need to start teaching it to infants. As mentioned earlier, Jerry

believes that the solution is in finding a way to give the language momentum. He

says:

> I once had a notion that if everyone in the Ido movement – I did the math on
> this – would each teach five new people every year their language, and each
> of those would teach five people, we'd have the entire six billion Earth
> population speaking Ido in about eleven years.

However, this plan never took off. Tatyana mentions that you can't force someone to

learn something they are not interested in, echoing the obstacles confronting Jerry's

tidy mathematical proposal. Will, who is undecided about whether he might teach any

children Esperanto, questions the ultimate value of early exposure to it:

At one point I felt like it would definitely be something I'd want to do, … in that I wish that I had had early exposure to a second language. … But … I [am] more on the fence, specifically because the advantages of early exposure to a language with Esperanto seem somewhat less significant, because it is possible to learn it to a high level as a non-native speaker – and not only possible but relatively common. And so I wonder sometimes about how advantageous it would be for my potential children to have it as a native language, when they could, if they wanted to, learn it later on and get to a good level in the language.

More succinctly and decidedly, Helm expresses a similar perception: "I think that if they would like to learn Esperanto they could do that in their grown up age." These opinions connect to another popular proposal for spreading Esperanto: teaching it in schools worldwide.

In *One language for the world*, after making his case for the pressing need to choose and adopt a universal language, Mario Pei addresses how a language might actually become universally spoken. If members of language movements are left to their own devices, Pei claims, it will take far too long. "The people of the earth are many… To reach them by the methods by which current interlanguage movements have reached their few million adherents would take not centuries, but millenniums" (1958: 206). Instead, he advocates for governmental educational intervention as the only feasible approach:

> There is one, and only one way in which they, or at least a considerable portion of them, can be reached and affected within the foreseeable future, and that is by direct, compulsive government action – the same kind of action that has proved so successful within the last century in extending the benefits of literacy to world populations which at the dawn of the nineteenth century were still fully 80 per cent illiterate (1958: 206).

Pei suggests, "instead of the compulsory study of one or more foreign tongues," which is already offered by "most educational systems," governments should instate "the compulsory study of a single supranational tongue, with the study of other

foreign tongues left optional with the students" (1958: 207). Pei mentions that "believers in the freedom of the individual" may at first oppose this idea, or that others might be concerned that such an endeavor would compromise national sovereignty, but Pei is confident that these fears can be assuaged with reason.

Pei's proposal, meant for the implementation of any possible universal language, can certainly be applied to Esperanto. Childhood education could sidestep the speech community's debate concerning native speakers. Assuming ideal circumstances: global consensus regarding the language, efficacy of education, etc., Esperanto would still face some obstacles. After the first generation in which Esperanto became globally spoken, all future speakers might become native speakers. Thus, if Esperanto were to become globally spoken, it would necessarily have to stay an auxiliary—secondary—language. That is to say, it should not be used by people who have another common language, at least not exclusively. If everyone were able to speak Esperanto and did not use it for international, or at least non-local, communication, the language would threaten natural languages and at the same time lose its safeguard against regional alterations. But, this being the case, for how many learners of Esperanto would the language actually be useful? And then, would the argument in favor of universal auxiliary language instruction crumble? Furthermore, if Esperanto were globally used, the speech community would grow beyond its original proponents, thereby incorporating speakers with different ideologies. The commonalities among Esperanto speakers would be diluted. Just as a student in a foreign language class cannot be said to have acquired the culture along with the language, a world populated by Esperanto students cannot be expected to acquire or

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uphold the original beliefs central to Esperanto. However, if Esperanto were to reach

its goal of becoming the universal auxiliary language, it would likely no longer need

the founding ideologies that motivate self-selected speakers to promote the language.

Chapter 6:
Conclusion

"[Esperanto] really opened up to lots of opportunities for me, and I really can't imagine where I'd be… if I hadn't read that article."
                                                                - Joel

"A lot of my friends abandoned the language. I stayed here and I will be staying here."
                                                                - Tatyana

Arthur Aughey dismisses Esperanto because "language is not just communication of the utilitarian kind, but the expression of the identity and the cultural unity of a people. Language is not about calculations of convenience, but is the expression of something akin to the 'national soul'" (Aughey 1992: 9). But, if you ask someone why their L_1 is their L_1, the reply will likely resemble, "because that is what my parents speak," or "because that is the language that is spoken where I grew up." People may be proud of their native language, and form a strong connection between it and their culture, but the reason they speak the language has less to do

with the "national soul" and more to do with practicality. In its simplest form, language is a tool. So, when it comes to second-language acquisition, it is not unlikely for a "calculation of convenience" to be relevant. If you ask someone why she chose to learn an L_2, she might say it is because she always thought it sounded beautiful, or she might express a desire to travel somewhere where that language is spoken. Regardless of whether the pursuit of an L_2 is inspired by linguistic aesthetic or linguistic curiosity, once learned, it will broaden sociocultural access and opportunity.

Esperanto's basic principles are not what make it unique; any universal language project is about facilitating communication. Esperanto was built on a dream but lives on practicality. Esperanto, the language, is a tool. It works the same as any other language, but it is a super-tool, a master key, that unlocks people and cultures like few other languages can. Esperanto is unique because of the number of its speakers, and language as a tool does nothing if it cannot be used for communication. However, Esperanto is not just a tool. It is evident that despite its artificial beginnings, an identity and a culture have flourished within the Esperanto speech community. Esperanto as a language (a combination of utility and culture) has a set of qualities that attract a diverse array of potential speakers, because not everyone who learns Esperanto does it for the same reasons.

The Esperanto speech community is not homogenous. Some members are idealists; some are pragmatists; most are a combination of the two. Because the speech community is spread across the globe, individual members have different experiences, lifestyles, and beliefs, within the speech community and outside of it. In

some regions, like in North America, Esperanto seems to be particularly attractive to independent learners, while in Europe, Esperanto caters to those with social interests. Esperanto speakers can be babies (though of course they are speakers because of their parents), inquisitive youths, college students, adults, and retirees. Not all Esperanto speakers want the same thing. Some want an intellectual exercise while others want access to different people and cultures. Some people who have learned how to speak Esperanto might not even consider themselves members of the speech community. This is because not everyone who comes to Esperanto falls in love. Some, with high ideals, become disenchanted when Esperanto fails to fulfill its promises of simplicity and internationality. Others find flaws in its linguistic structure, and rather than setting their disagreement aside in the interest of maximizing practicality, decide to seek a better language. Some enjoy it but want more, and let Esperanto fall by the wayside while they engage in other pursuits.

Esperanto speakers, who may or may not self-identify as Esperantists, are, first and foremost, individuals. Looking at the surface, at demographics, it seems as though anyone might be an Esperanto speaker. Esperanto speakers seem like an arbitrary collection. Arika Okrent titles one of her chapters on Esperanto: "A Nudist, A Gay Ornithologist, a Railroad Enthusiast, and a Punk Cannabis Smoker Walk into a Bar…". The thirteen participants in this study were just as diverse. Tatyana teaches philology. Zdravka worked as an economist in Croatia, but is now a social worker. Normand is a tree technician and horticulturist for the city of Montréal. Randy has degrees in mathematics, complex analysis, and topology, and now manages a federal grant for the state of Georgia. Joshua got a degree in linguistics but is the current

Director of Administration of The Jazz School. Helm calls himself "more or less a university dropout." Now retired, he once taught Swedish as a Second Language and worked as a translator. Jim is a retired programmer. Will works in a bakery and as a writing tutor, but hopes to get an advanced degree in creative writing. Jerry was a technical writer for forty years, but describes his current occupation as "language dabbler." Jorge works as a translator, language teacher, and website developer. stevo spent seventeen years in the US Army, and after that "worked at various odd jobs," including working as a translator. When they lived in Georgia, Joel worked in the Department of Revenue and Yevgeniya worked for the Red Cross Marketing Department, but now they both work for the Esperantic Studies Foundation. Where is the connection between a baker, a computer programmer, and a horticulturist? There must be something about Esperanto, as a language, that brings these people together – or there must be commonalities despite the image created by demographic data.

This study and others show that Esperanto speakers do have certain things in common. They are nearly fanatical about language. Underneath the array of occupations, 7 of 13 participants got a degree in a language-related field: linguistics, communication, language, etc. Esperanto speakers who are active within the community are people-persons, and use Esperanto to access others with similar interests and desires. Excluding international interactions that have taken place at congresses, the 13 participants, themselves from 6 countries, have had person-to-person interactions with Esperanto speakers from at least 25 different countries on 5 continents. Scholarly estimates and organization membership numbers aside, this demonstrates, firstly, that Esperanto is widely spoken and, secondly, that the speech

community is indeed internationally interconnected. Active members of the speech

community find benefits through membership: mental stimulus, increased language

aptitude, literature, access to information, travel opportunities, cultural exchange,

relationships, a sense of belonging, and more. Members of the speech community

value an increase in speakers as an expansion of the community, though the proper

way to generate this increase is not unanimously agreed upon. At its most basic level,

Esperanto is about communication, and because it provides a means for international,

cross-cultural communication, it enables cultural understanding. Despite naysayers

and shortcomings, Esperanto does what it was meant to do. For people who speak

Esperanto, its becoming a truly universally used auxiliary language is secondary.

According to Will:

> There is, generally speaking, a sense that Esperanto is somehow something
> unprestigious or is something somehow ridiculous. There was a talk the other
> day, … that actually compared the development of Esperanto, and what
> Esperanto had become, to Yiddish, actually, in that the original aspirations for
> Esperanto were to become a new Latin, so a respected and prestigious
> international language, and that what actually happened to it was that it
> became a new Yiddish, Yiddish being a language used productively and
> effectively as an international language by a specific community … but a
> language which, outside of that community, was not afforded or not given
> status or recognized as something useful, … an international language without
> that kind of prestige given to it by the world at large, even though within the
> community that used it, it worked very well.

The unconvinced may undervalue the language, but for those who use it, Esperanto is

no less useful. When people outside the community attempt to discredit its validity,

they call Esperanto a failure because it hasn't achieved its ultimate goal.

> Sometimes … the misconstrued idea [is] that Esperanto is not successful, it
> could not be successful, if it's not adopted as the one second language for
> everyone in the whole world, and until it reaches that point it's useless. That
> idea is not important to my daily experience. For me, Esperanto does play a
> role in bringing people together at the present. Whether or not it is accepted

by a government as the one international language, … Esperanto bridges gaps, bridges communication, cultural gaps, between people as we speak. And I've experienced that in my own life (Joel).

Anyone who has lived the benefits of Esperanto does not really find its becoming universal crucial when evaluating its successes. Though Esperanto is not universally spoken, this study has shown that through active membership in the Esperanto speech community, speakers find benefits, personal growth, and a human connection.

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