

The Vitality of Esperanto: To be or Not to be?

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ABSTRACT

Esperanto is a relatively ideal artificial language compared to others, for the reason that it fuses the characteristics of languages from different countries, and is easy to learn. It has developed for more than a century. As a result, it has formed a rigorous grammatical and lexical system. However, people are still debating whether Esperanto should continue to exist. Some believe that Esperanto should be spread, while others think that it will become extinct in the near future. This article discusses about the vitality of Esperanto by researching and providing examples of how it has emerged and developed, as well as its grammatical and lexical features., which proves to those concerned that Esperanto deserves worldwide publicity.

Keywords: *Esperanto, languages, Artificial languages, Unification.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Esperanto can connect people of different countries, races and cultures to communicate freely and fairly. It, to some extent, can help to avoid arguments between nations, because it belongs to all people in the world. It symbolizes the spirit of equality and peace, and is still vital today.

Serving as an international language that is easy to learn, Esperanto can make people of whatever nation, whatever ethnic or race better understand each other, which verifies the great importance of itself.

With its unique attributes of neutrality, equality and unambiguousness, Esperanto deserves worldwide recognition, publicity and acceptance. In this essay, I would discuss why Esperanto is still vital and how it can serve as the best choice of an global language.

1.1. The Origin of Esperanto

Esperanto is a language created in 1887 by Zamenhof, a Polish linguist and doctor. It has been about 130 years from its first establishment to today, and is still active in the modern world after suffering great strikes of World War I and II [1]. Today, Esperanto Leagues are established in many countries, including Korea, Japan, Iraq, Brazil, Argentina and Togo, etc. In 1954, the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) granted the International Esperanto League as a Level B

Advisory Relationship Department, which is meaningful for developing such an artificial language [2].

1.2. The Properties of Esperanto

Esperanto was created based on Indo-European languages, and has followed the advantages of this system to simplify and standardize itself. Furthermore, Zamenhof has made Esperanto a neutral, equal and unambiguous language.

1.2.1. Neutrality

After Zamenhof announced the Esperanto plan, he has repeatedly stated that Esperanto belongs to all mankind. It does not exclude or attempt to replace any national language. From a linguistic point of view, it will not bring any language and cultural aggression, and will not have a negative impact on the national language and culture of each country. It does not hurt people's rights to speak the language of their own culture, but just provides an international auxiliary language for human beings to conduct international exchanges. E.g. Esperanto has provided convenience for people from China and France to communicate, and, at the same time, they are free to keep using Mandarin and France in their own countries. Esperanto has the characteristics of neutrality.

1.2.2. Equality

Esperanto has assimilated the advantages of many languages and represents a spirit of equality. It is simple and easy to learn, and is more conducive to equal exchanges between nations, for the reason that the language is not used as an official language by any nations, but is new for all its speakers. Though its vocabulary may seem European, its lexical composition and grammar are, in fact, highly international. E.g. generally speaking, the suffix -as is added after every verb, while -o after every noun. Parts of speech can be easily changed by altering the suffix of a word. This can be understood by people all around the world. When using Esperanto, it feels more egalitarian from a linguistic point of view than using any of the seven language families.

1.2.3. Unambiguousness

This includes two aspects: language consistency and form and meaning. A pronunciation corresponds to only one spelling, a word has only one meaning, and there are only a few polysemous words. For example, in British English, "a set of rooms for living in that are part of a larger building and are usually all on one floor" refers to the word "flat"; while in American English that is "apartment", and flat only means "level and smooth, with no curved, high, or hollow parts". But in Esperanto, "apartamento" means "apartment" and "glata" means "flat (adj.)" only. Generally speaking, one Esperanto word corresponds to one meaning only. Table 1 shows how the same word in English, which have different meanings, are expressed in Esperanto:

Table 1. A comparison between English polysemy words and the Esperanto translation of each meaning. Each Esperanto word has only one corresponding meaning.

English	Definition	Esperanto
Fly	(n.)A small insect with two wings	Muŝo
	(v.)Moves through the air	Flugi
Match	(n.)a short, thin stick made of wood or cardboard and covered with a special chemical at one end that burns when rubbed firmly against a rough surface	Alumeto
	(v.)similar or look attractive together	Parigi
sign	(n.)a notice giving information, directions, a warning, etc.	signo
	(v.)To write your name, usually on a written or printed document, to show that you agree with its contents or have written or created it yourself	subscribi

2. THE GRAMMAR OF ESPERANTO

Esperanto was born out of the Indo-European language family, and is easy to learn. Table 2 shows the Esperanto alphabet:

Table 2. The Esperanto alphabet. 22 of them are based on Latin, while the other six are formed by adding diacritics.

Vowels	Consonants							Semi-vowels
A a	B b	C c	Ĉ ĉ	D d	F f	G g	Ĝ ĝ	J j
E e	H h	Ĥ ĥ	I i	Ĵ ĵ	K k	L l	M m	Ŭ ŭ
I i	N n	O o	P p	R r	S s	Ŝ ŝ	T t	
O o	V v	Z z						
U u								

Esperanto has only 16 grammar rules. Such as:

Verbs have no change of person and number; e.g. Mi laboras (I work)/ Li laboras (He works)/ Ili laboras (They work). In the present progressive tense, no matter what the subject is, the verb is always laboras.

Every preposition has a definite and unchanging meaning, e.g. Al (to), el (from), de (of), en (in), etc, and cannot be mixed together;

There is no indefinite article, only the definite article la, which can be used for all genders, numbers, and cases. e.g. La knabinoj (the girls), la koko (the chicken), la manĝo (the food);

Compound words are formed by simple concatenation of words (the main word comes after) e.g. matenmanĝo (Breakfast=Morning – on + Eat).

Each word is read and written in accord with its spelling. Each pronunciation has a fixed corresponding letter. After learning the rules of the twenty-eight letters, any word can be read and written.

The stress of a word is always on the penultimate syllable, no matter how long the word is; e.g. For the word "viro" (man), the stress is on the syllable "vi"; While for the word "komencanto (beginner), the stress is on "can".

The loan words only need to be written according to the Esperanto orthography. When several different words are derived from a single root, it is best to use the basic word unchanged, and from this to construct other words according to the rules of Esperanto. For example, the word *hundo* comes from German (Meaning: Dog). In fact, "dog" in German is *hund*, but because most nouns end in o's in Esperanto grammar, nothing except an o is added after the word. In the same way, the plural form follows the grammar of Esperanto: *Hundoj*.

These will save the learner a lot of time to master the language[3].

3. THE ACADEMIC DEBATE ON ESPERANTO

Although the language system of Esperanto is relatively rigorous, it still has not become a mainstream language. At present, the whole world already has its own independent language system, especially the two dominant language families: the Indo-European language family and the Sino-Tibetan language family. They have acquired a more important position, so everyone has long been accustomed to it, so many scholars believe that people would rather accept the traditional language than learn a new language[4-6].

Esperanto has been debating its own shortcomings since its inception, such as its plural ending -j, its plural adjectives, its overly "Europeanized" vocabulary, its vibrato R, and the fact that the letters with diacritics are, in common, difficult to type on the keyboard. Although the grammar of Esperanto is rather rigorous, there are still some deficiencies. For example, the word "liberty" is "libero", and the word "liberalism" is "liberalismo"; However, according to the word-formation patterns, "liberalism" should be "liberismo". Also, the gender affixes -o and -ino are thought to be detrimental to gender equality.

Personally, I do not see Esperanto as "perfect", however, because of its neutrality, its imperfection does not prevent it from being an ideal solution for an international secondary language. In fact, thanks to the flexibility of Esperanto, most of its shortcomings do not affect people's basic communication. For example, many Chinese learners dislike the vibrato R in Esperanto and wish to remove this difficult sound from

Esperanto. However, the problem with this letter is only a trivial matter, far from affecting the vitality of Esperanto itself - even if r is simply pronounced as l, meanings can also be judged based on the text. Such as *flago* (flag) and *frago* (strawberry): if someone says they want to hang a *flago* in the classroom, then people can probably tell that they want to hang a flag, not a strawberry; similarly, if a person says they are hungry and wants to eat *fragoj*, then people can also know that they want to eat strawberries.

4. The VITALITY OF ESPERANTO

4.1. The Development of Esperanto

Esperanto is now the most common man-made language in the world. According to incomplete statistics, there are about 2 million Esperanto speakers in the world [7]. There are Esperanto organizations and Esperanto speakers in more than 120 countries and regions around the world, especially in urban areas. This also shows that Esperanto has a certain influence on a global scale. Esperanto is especially popular in Eastern Europe, Northern Europe, South Korea, Japan, and Iran in Asia, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico in America, and Togo in Africa. Due to the development of technology, more and more people started to use online learning channels to make themselves Esperantists, thus promoting the improvement of Esperanto and accelerating its worldwide popularity.

Esperanto has always been alive. Thanks to its constant evolution, Esperanto is continuously developing. An interesting example is that the Esperanto translation of "mouse (A small mammal with short fur, a pointed face, and a long tail)" is "Muso", which is originated from English. With the development of science and technology, the word *muso* has evolved into the meaning of "mouse" along with "mouse (a small device that you move across a surface to move a cursor on your computer screen)", and has become one of the few polysemous words in Esperanto. Many Esperanto speakers are also strongly supporting and promoting the Esperanto movement.

4.2. Unification of Global Languages

From the point of view of Chinese history, before Qin Shihuang unified the six kingdoms, he implemented the system of "writing with the same text", which means to unify the characters [8-10]. Thanks to the unity of language, the Great Qin Empire could become powerful. Similarly, if the world today wants to promote economic development, it is very beneficial to have a globally unified language.

Today, the world has more than 200 countries and more than 5000 languages, and translating every document of the United Nations into various languages

would be cumbersome and wasteful. Therefore, the call for Esperanto as the official language is getting louder and louder. With the advent of globalization, the unification of languages will inevitably be put on the agenda. It can be proved that Esperanto has always existed in daily application. From the current trend, Esperanto will not only not die out, but will be recognized, learned and promoted by more and more people. The development of Esperanto shows its vitality.

5. CONCLUSION

Through research, I have reached the conclusion that Esperanto, as the best choice of communicating language globally, has not lost its vitality, but has not been fully developed in the world yet. The development of Esperanto depends on the advocacy and support of governments of various countries, the efforts of global Esperanto speakers, and the gradual common application of the international public. Thus, to make Esperanto truly exert its potential vitality, a worldwide effort should be made to strengthen its publicity and its application breadth should be expanded, encouraging it to progress with the development of the major national languages until it becomes a veritable international auxiliary language. This article will arouse the awareness about the significance of Esperanto. In the final analysis, Esperanto is a door to easier global communication, and to an entirely shared world, and this article is just the key to open this door.

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