<p style="text-align:center">**English-Esperanto of Today**</p>

Jitka Crhová
Language School
Tijuana, Mexico

Dr. Jitka Crhová has been working at the UABC since 1992. Currently she has been teaching English in general courses, post-graduate courses and in the B.A. program in the Language School, Tijuana campus. Certified by Cambridge University (C.O.T.E.) and UCSD San Diego (ELT). Her PhD (Romanic Languages, Linguistics) was granted by the Palacky University, Czech Republic. In 2004, she published the book *Atitudes Towards the Language* (for UABC-CEC/Museo-Pacmyc, ICBC). Her field of interest is sociolinguistics.
jcrhova@hotmail.com

Abstract:
The article *English- Esperanto of Today* compares the roles of Esperanto and English as international languages. It provides insight into why English has become the leading second language in the world today. It includes a discussion concerning linguistic homonymy and heteronomy, followed by a short outline of the history of Esperanto. After the typological comparison of the two languages, the article states the possible reasons why artificial languages, such as Esperanto, designed to foster international communication, has ceased its place to English.

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Introduction

   Imagine a world where everybody could communicate with each other with the same language, the one chosen for international communication. Would the

world be a happier place then? And which will be the chosen language and who will do the selection and according to which criteria? Will the usage of the same language, in form, bring also a similar way of thinking and feeling? The creator of Esperanto certainly "hoped" that the language created by him was suited for that purpose. Little could he have expected English would take the place he designated to Esperanto in the course of history. With vernacular languages of the world being reduced in number every day, are we slowly approaching to the stage when "the earth was of one language, and of one speech"(Genesis 11:1)? The question is: do we really desire such thing?

1.   Language Homonymy versus Heteronomy

Language is our very own human possession. We speak different languages but we are not free from prejudices about other languages or other accents within our own language. In the back of our minds we have feelings and ideas related to whether the linguistic diversity /heteronomy as well as linguistic universality /homonymy are good and desirable or harmful.

        Many times we reason subconsciously and we tend to adopt the language universality, in other words, we think that it's a good thing to have one language that we all could communicate with. Where does this archetypal ideal originate? The basis of our Western World Civilization favors universality, i.e. one language for global communication. This idea somehow reflects the old myth of the *Babel Tower* from the Old Testament, Book of Genesis, where the ideal world was being described as the world where only one language was spoken, but as a punishment to mortals who dared to challenge the God, their speech was confused, they were dispersed all over the world "babbling", forming thus the different languages of the world. Perhaps the idea that the linguistic diversity is disadvantageous and that the people's power would increase with their ability to communicate perfectly with each other was a reminiscence of that ancient belief.

        The evidence that people are somehow attracted by the idea of linguistic conformity could be seen in how we evaluate the dialects (and languages) different from our own, which we often ridicule, in the existence of numerous institutions that regulate the usage of language (like language academies), and in the existence of grammar books and dictionaries (Chambers, 2003: 228). All the previously mentioned is a vivid proof of the same tendency towards homogeneity. The existence of an international language such as *Esperanto*, designed to promote linguistic universality, is just another prove of the same tendency.

2.   History of Esperanto

    The allusion to the Babel Tower wasn't in the case of Esperanto and its creator, *Doctor Zamenhof*, just casual. One of his biographers, Henri Masson (see www. lojban.org) called him "the man who defined Babel". Linguistic diversity caused Zamenhof a lot of suffering. He was born in Poland, in 1859, where he experienced frequent hostilities among Polish, Russian, German and

Jewish speaking people. Since his young age, he was driven by the idea of eradicating language diversity that, according to him, prevented men from effective communication on the basis of equality and fraternity.

Zamenhof was a profound idealist and not precisely a linguist (he studied ophtaphmology). When he, in <u>1887</u>, first published the rules for the new international language, he signed the document by the pseudonym *Doctoro Esperanto* (Doctor Hopeful). Since then the language he invented is called <u>Esperanto</u>. Zamenhof's goal was to create an easy-to- learn and flexible language as a <u>universal second language</u> to foster international understanding. He was convinced that if everybody studied apart of his native language also some international language (like his Esperanto), the person would save time, money, and effort (the last mentioned is because Esperanto has easy rules to follow).

Perhaps you wonder <u>how</u> he could spread an artificial language on such a massive scale. In reality, he managed it with a help of a little trick - he let his readers sign a document, which stated a promise, or rather a compromise to learn Esperanto conditioned by a certain number of people (10,000) who would publicly make the same promise. The letter of compromise was accompanied by a name and address of a new student of Esperanto. This practice resulted as a very good strategy and is still one of the organizational principles of Esperanto's associations.

Esperanto for Zamenhof was not an academic attempt, a kind of linguistic project, nor some sort of language laboratory. For him, it was a practical cause, due to his life. His idea was always to elevate humanity, to invest all the energy in favor of a better world; he had a kind of mystic vocation. The new, international language was created neutral on purpose, so that it would be easy and accessible to everybody (not only to elites). Zamenhof insisted that only the creation of a <u>new language</u> is an <u>effective tool for international communication</u> in its real sense. He considered wrong the idea of elevating the status of any existing, widely spoken language and adopting it as international. It just didn't seem fair to him.

How is Esperanto?

Esperanto is a completely regular language, which has only <u>16</u> morphosyntactical rules. If you are a bilingual speaker of English and Spanish, you will be able to pronounce all its sounds. Since its vocabulary is predominantly based on Romanic languages (75% of vocabulary, according to Janton, 1976: 64), Spanish speakers will probably understand it without major difficulty.

Let's do an experiment. When you hear somebody saying the following words in Esperanto: *unu, du, tri, kvar, kvin, ses, sep, ok, nau, dek;* what do you think the person was saying? If you said that person was probably counting from one to ten, then you guessed correctly. If we remain for a moment more in the category of numerals, Esperanto adds suffixes *dek, cent, mil, miliono* to express multiples. If somebody is referring to the quantity of *trimil ducent okdek sep,* then

we can probably figure out that in numerical form it is possible to transcribe as 3287. From the previous examples, you are perhaps convinced that Esperanto is not difficult at all. Another comparison we are going to discuss is the typological one.

3.Typological Comparison: Esperanto and English

The typological comparison will be better documented if we look at the following table.

Table 3.1 Typological comparison: Esperanto and English

	Esperanto	English
Spoken in:	Worldwide	United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, the United States and others
Region	-	Primarily Western Europe, North America and Australia
Speakers	L1=approx. 1000 L2 est. 100,000- 1.6 million	L1= approx. 443 million L2= approx. 2 billion (600 effectively) 1/3 of the world population can speak some English
Genetic classification	Constructed language, Indo-European based	Indo-European language group, subgroup: Germanic
Linguistic typology	Agglutinating language	Analytical (isolating) language
Official status	No nation, but used officially by few international organizations	United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, many states in the United States, some other countries
Regulated	"Academo de Esperanto"	None

(These data are compiled from Fromkin & Rodman (1993) and from 1999 estimates retrieved from www.wikipedia.org.)

Region

As it could be seen, *Esperanto* doe not have <u>any specific region</u> where it is spoken. Perhaps that is the reason why the speakers of Esperanto meet frequently through various associations in different congresses.

North America, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada are the most important geographical areas where *English* is spoken.

Speakers:

As strange as it may look, *Esperanto* has some 1000 <u>native speakers</u>. Those native speakers basically come from families where parents speak Esperanto and chose Esperanto as the main language for communication with their children. The most famous native speaker of Esperanto is perhaps *George Soros*, an American multimillionaire and philanthropist of Hungarian origin, who was instructed in Esperanto by his father. As an artificial language, *Esperanto* is studied mainly as the <u>second language</u> of the people in different parts of the world.

English, on the other hand, is the second most spoken native language worldwide after Chinese (Mandarin), according to Fromkin and Rodman (1993: 351-353). But as a L2, <u>English is the most widely learned second language in the world.</u> For different socio-political and cultural reasons, English has become <u>the most effective international language.</u>

Genetically:

Esperanto is an artificial language. Its structure resembles languages of Indo-European language group (but it is simplified).

English belongs to the Indo-European language family, which includes the most of the major language families; it has further subdivisions, English belongs to the subgroup <u>Germanic languages</u>

Typologically:

Esperanto is an <u>agglutinative</u> language. It means, a type of language in which words are formed by joining morphemes together (like if we glued one part after another). It is a form of synthetic language, where each affix (prefix, infix, suffix) represents one unit of meaning and many affixes are strung together (one affix for the past tense, one for plural, one for diminutive, one for adjective, etc.). Esperanto, as other agglutinative languages, has a high rate of affixes (morphemes per word), and has a tendency to be very regular.

<u>An example</u> of an agglutinative character of Esperanto is the word:

mal-san-ul-ej-o. If we try to analyze the word morphologically, let's see if it's possible to disclose the meaning of the yet unknown world. The morpheme *mal* expresses negation, *san* is a root word with the lexical meaning "health", *ul* denotes a personificator, *ej* is locative (denotes place), and *o,* which is a nominal morpheme. This rather complicated word in Esperanto has its relatively simple equivalent in English, but if you didn't know the word beforehand, I suppose you couldn't have guessed that *malsanulejo* is "hospital" in English.

English, on the other hand, is a morphologically fairly analytical (isolating) language. Languages like that have usually one morpheme per word. They often express abstract concepts using independent words, while synthetic languages tend to use affixes (prefixes, suffixes or infixes) and internal modification of roots for the same purposes. English is in character, an isolating language, which builds sentences by rearranging word sized units like: *Paul kissed Jane* and *Jane kissed Paul,* while other languages express *who* kissed *whom* with the help of cases affixes or by modifying the verb affixes (conjugation) that agree with its role-players in number, gender, and person. Analytical languages have stricter rules than the synthetic ones and the word order is also an important feature. English is a fixed-word-order language where each phrase has its defined position, i.e. in the case of the language this paper is written, we are speaking of the SVO (subject-verb-object) word order language. Each English sentence must have a subject, even if it's only the grammatical one like: *It's raining*, where the subject (*it)* doesn't really refer to anything. Analytic languages rely on context and pragmatic consideration (the same word can mean two different things, according the context). An example: the word 'love' can have a grammatical meaning of a verb or a noun depending on the concrete sentence. Analytical languages, such as English, also do not distinguish, for example, cases like: nominative, genitive, dative or accusative, gender of the noun, etc. as synthetic languages do.

Official status:

Esperanto is not an official language in any country. It is used in some organizations, in areas of world travels, cultural organizations, radio broadcasting and literature.

English has official status in almost all English-speaking countries. In the U.S., English is official in many states. For example in California (since 1986); English is not an official language nationally and is not contemplated as such legislatively in the U.S. Constitution. (It's the same case as Spanish in Mexico, where Spanish is given the status of the official language but the Constitution of the country does not contemplate it at any of its articles, so legally there is no official language.) As the term 'official language' suggests governmental recognition, we may say that English in the U.S. is *de facto* an official language, though it's not official *de iure.*

Regulations:

While *Esperanto* is regulated by the Academy of Esperanto, *English* language does not have any type of regulating institution of the language academy type. The English language is basically a matter of convention perpetuated through dictionaries, grammars, stylistic handbooks and manuals. In addition to this, we should also consider the regulating mechanisms of the media (BBC English, for example).

4. Esperanto and English as International Languages

It's obvious from the previous comparison, and from everybody's experience, that the language that has become the most effective as a second language is *English.* One third of world's population can communicate in English, with different degrees of proficiency, of course. (The estimate concerning the number of English users in the world is based on Crystal (1985), see Kachru and Nelson, 1998:79.) We may ask: why English, which was not specifically designed as the international language, has become one, and why Esperanto, created intentionally as a language for international communication in massive scale, has failed? Why <u>not</u> Esperanto, if it is so easy to learn?

Several experiments have been carried on to prove how <u>easy</u> could *Esperanto* be learned. We will mention only one of them (cited in Janton, 1976:126). In Great Britain they divided a class of teenagers into two groups: the group **A** were very good students and the other group, **B** were average students. **A** group students were taught *French* for one year (five times a week), and **B** group students were taught *Esperanto* for the same amount of time with the same frequency of classes. After a year, exams were administered to both groups. The results were surprising: one year of Esperanto in **B** group equaled to three years of French in **A** group. Similar conclusions were reached in other countries with respect to different languages and Esperanto.

Esperanto may be easy; nevertheless it is an <u>artificial language</u> and thus a sort of unnatural with all its *regularity*. I think that a human being may be both attracted by the idea of order and regularity, but in essence he/she is at the same time repelled by that very same idea. I 'm of the opinion that a human condition is more linked to irregularity, as Steven Pinker states it:

> Irregularity in grammar seems like the epitome of human eccentricity and quirkiness. […] Irregularity is tightly encapsulated in the word-building system; the system as a whole is quite cuspy. Irregular forms are roots, which are found inside stems, which are found inside words, some of which can be formed by regular inflection. This layering not only predicts many of the possible and impossible words in English (for example, why *Darwianism* sounds better than *Darwinismian*); it provides a neat explanation for many trivia questions about seemingly illogical usage, such as: Why in baseball is a batter said to have *flied out*? Why has no

mere mortal ever *flown out* to center field? Why is the hockey team in Toronto called the *Maple Leafs* and not the *Maple Leaves*? Why do many people say *Walkmans,* rather than *Walkmen*, as the plural of *Walkman?* Why would it sound odd for someone to say that all of his daughter's friends are *low-lives*? (Pinker, 1994:141-142)

Real beauty in life (and in a language) can only be appreciated when it is slightly imperfect. Rationally designed languages have a taste of science-fiction star galaxy programs or they may evoke the idea of a controlled society, and normative speech, such as the one mentioned in Orwell's novel.

It is fair to mention, that Esperanto, contrary to the Orwell's fictional totalitarian society where the language, free of irregularities, was also used as a means that characterized such society, had a strong <u>ideological charge</u>. Mainly due to its ideological content, from the time Esperanto was created till the Second World War, the number of Esperanto's speakers was growing. After the war, the number of people joining the rows of Zamenhof's organization stagnated. It's more or less the time when the utopian ideas of brotherhood and equality of all human beings were gradually abandoned and the essence of Esperanto was reduced more to its <u>pragmatic</u> aspect- Esperanto as a language free of irregularities and useful for international communication. For some of Esperanto's speakers such reduction turned unappealing. Only recently there are signs of slight change- the idealistic element seems to get stronger.

The other argument that is often heard is that Esperanto has <u>no culture</u>, or more precisely that it does not represent any given culture. There is a great number of people who learn a foreign language to gain an insight into another culture, a so called *integrative* motivation to learn a foreign language as opposed to *instrumental* motivation, in which a learner is motivated to learn a second language for utilitarian purposes like improving a social status, furthering a career or passing an exam (see Gardner & Lambert, 1972, for further details on motivation).

Defenders of Esperanto, on the other hand claim, that Esperanto has developed a culture of its own during more than a century of its existence. There is also literature in Esperanto, both original (100 novels or so) and translations (25.000 titles). You can read Shakespeare in Esperanto, as well as Cervantes (Janton, 1976:103). Esperanto has also recognized writers, like William Auld, who was nominated twice for the Nobel Prize for Literature. In spite of the above-mentioned arguments, Esperanto does not reflect the culture of a certain <u>ethnic</u> group. We can hardly expect to prove some Esperanto's culinary specialty or to admire Esperanto's typical dress since Esperanto lacks this cultural dimension.

Esperanto is also being criticized for its proclaimed <u>neutrality</u>. For a language that calls itself neutral and fit to be the world's universal, international language it is in reality very Euro-centric. As a truly neutral language, we would expect to draw its vocabulary from a much wider variety of languages. (There are about 5000 languages in the world today and if two thirds of a vocabulary of an international language is based on the Romance languages, and one third in Germanic languages, we can hardly talk about neutral lexical choice. In addition

to that, syntax of Esperanto is also based on Romance languages and phonology and semantic are derived from Slavic languages. Obviously a great number of other, widely spread languages have in Esperanto no representation at all. For example, such widely spoken word languages as Mandarin (rank one as far as the number of speakers in the word) or Hindi (rank three in number of speakers) were completely left out. Esperantists defend themselves saying that the preference for Romance/Germanic language elements is justified by the fact that most people study those languages in schools, and like that Esperanto will serve to relatively more people.

The <u>language typology</u> of Esperanto (=agglutinative language) represents yet another disadvantage. The learner of Esperanto who masters some common European language is kind of lost in Esperanto's numerous affixes and cannot decipher the meaning of the word because agglutinative type of languages do not mark the etymological relation among words like most European languages do.

These and some other reasons have contributed to, according to our opinion, the failure of Esperanto. Esperanto has not lived up to the creator's dream of becoming a universal language. (On one occasion, I heard a response given to a person interested in learning Esperanto: the person was discouraged to spend time studying Esperanto and advised to use the time learning English instead.)

Esperanto obviously has a little chance of ever competing with *English.* Today, people learn Esperanto for diverse reasons - they learn it to meet other people who share a similar (internationalist) view of the world; they learn it to exchange correspondence with people all over the world, to read Esperanto literature, or just for prosaic reasons, they were unsuccessful in learning any natural language, so they try to learn Esperanto as it's easier. The propedeutic value of Esperanto consists of its usage in the second language classroom context, where a portion of a foreign language class is dedicated to Esperanto. Students thus learn quickly, their confidence will grow; they will be able to have pen pals and be able to communicate in short time. Having reached the goal of successful communication relatively quickly, students will be motivated to keep studying other, more complex foreign languages. The usage of Esperanto is thus instrumental; it serves as a bridge to other languages.

English is the most widely learned second language in the world. The hegemony of English as an international language also raises concern and controversy, not only among the speakers of other languages, but also among the sociolinguists. Numerous discussions are held to what extent it is the result of globalization. English is associated with modern technology, with economic progress and internationalization. People of all over the world are learning it and also have their children to learn it as early as possible. The spread of English is a new sociolinguistic reality and we must react according to its changing context. Non-native speakers of English are using English for communication among each other more and more (A Mexican software expert is communicating with his Brazilian colleague in English, an example provided by a former student of mine). The traditional prototype paradigm of second language teaching, which assumed

that a nonnative person learned English to be able to communicate with a native speaker of English, no longer represents the primary context of the use of English in today's world. (See Sridhar, 1998:65)

5. Final Thought: Utopia in the Postmodern World

The end of the 19th century was charged with utopia, idealism and dreams about the end of hegemonies. Esperanto was just one of its obvious manifestations. At the end of the 20th century, the situation was very different: the utopia seemed dead, the alternative world impossible. The world appeared to be a unipolar place run by one leading policy. English, the language of the economic superpower has become a hegemonic international language with deep ideological impact. For many of us it does not seem to be the language of Shakespeare or Edgar Allan Poe anymore, but the language of stock-exchange market. For I believe that the true appreciation of the English language is possible only through its full dimension - socio-historical and cultural.
Where there is hope, there is "esperanza", and a space for dreams and utopias.

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