1 Esperanto History

1859 – Zamenhof born in Bialystok (then Russia, now Poland), four languages were common Russian, Polish, German and Yiddish. Highschool in Warsaw, studies Russian, French, German, Latin, Greek, later English. Then studies medicine in Moscow.

1887 – First textbook under a pseudonym Esperanto (the one who hopes) published, 40 pages; in Russian; later in Polish, German and French.

1891 – 33 textbooks in 12 languages available.

1895 – Russian censor prohibits Zamenhof’s magazine La Esperantisto, because L.N.Tolstoy wrote two articles for it. Another magazine Lingvo Internacia starts to be published in Sweden.

1905 – The first International Esperanto Conference (La Internacia Kongreso) in Boulognesur-Mer, France. 688 participants from 20 countries.

1907 – Ido schism.

1908 – La Universala Esperanto Asocio (UEA, The Universal Esperanto Association) was founded. See www.uea.org

1917 – Zamenhof dies in Warsaw, Poland.

1987 – 100th anniversary; Congress in Warsaw, Poland; 5946 Esperantists from nearly 60 countries

Ido. Created by a committee of scientists (incl. linguist Otto Jespersen) on the basis of Esperanto and Idiom Neutral, plus some Zamenhof’s later proposals (rejected by the Esperanto community).

No accented letters, pronoun for s/he, plural by -i, no NP agreement, object in SVO sentences does not require accusative.

About 1/4 of Esperantists accepted Ido as ”improved” Esperanto, the rest sees it as a betrayal. There is still a lot of acrimony between the two groups even today.

See: http://members.aol.com/idolinguo/index.html

How many speakers? Reasonable estimates range from 800K to 10M. What do you call a speaker? About 1000 native speakers.

Many original and translated books, many magazines, there was even a radio. British Esperanto Library owns 20K books.

Where? Especially Central, Northern and Easter Europe (especially railroad employees), Russia, China, Korea.

A dangerous language. Read Ulrich Lins: La Danĝera Lingvo (The Dangerous Language)
• France banned the teaching of Esperanto in schools in early 1920’s; the Minister of Education emphasized that ‘French will always be the language of civilization’.

• Soviet Union: During Stalin, 30 000 Esperantists arrested, 2 000 killed.

• Hitler referred to Esperanto as a tool of Jewish world domination in his speeches, Main Kampf, etc. Many speakers were killed. Zamenhof’s family killed.

• The prewar and wartime Japanese government discouraged, persecuted, and sometimes executed Esperanto speakers.

2 Esperanto Grammar

Esperanto is a highly regular language of agglutinating type. Some of the categories are expressed synthetically and some analytically. There is only one paradigm for nouns and one paradigm for verbs.

2.1 The sixteen rules

The original rules listed in the first textbook of Esperanto.

1. There is no indefinite article; there is only a definite article la, alike for all genders, cases and numbers.

2. Nouns have the ending -o. To form the plural, add the ending -j. There are only two cases: nominative and accusative; the latter can be obtained from the nominative by adding the ending -n. The other cases are expressed with the aid of prepositions (genitive by de, dative by al, ablative by per or other prepositions, according to meaning).

3. Adjectives end in -a. Cases and numbers are as for nouns. The comparative is made with the word pli , the superlative with plej ; for the comparative the conjunction ol is used.

4. The basic numerals (not declined) are: unu, du, tri, kvar, kvin, ses, sep, ok, nau, dek, cent, mil. Tens and hundreds are formed by simple juxtaposition of the numerals. To show ordinal numbers we add the adjective ending; for multiples, the suffix -obl; for fractions, -on; for collectives, -op; for divisionals, the word po. Noun and adverb numerals can also be used.

5. Personal pronouns: mi, vi, li, ŝi, ĝi (for an object or animal), si, ni, vi, ili, oni; the possessive pronouns are formed by addition of the adjective ending. Declension is as for nouns.

6. The verb does not change for person or number. Forms of the verb: present time takes the ending -as; past time, -is; future time, -os; conditional mood, -us; command mood, -u; infinitive mood, -i. Participles (with adjectival or adverbial meaning): present active, -ant; past active, -int; future active, -ont; present passive, -at; past passive, -it; future passive, -ot. All forms of the passive are formed with the aid of the corresponding form of the verb esti and the passive participle of the required verb; the preposition with the passive is de.
7. **Adverbs** end in -e; comparison is as for adjectives.

8. All **prepositions** take the nominative.

9. Every word is read as it is written.

10. The **accent** always falls on the next-to-last syllable. When accenting a noun with an elided -o, the accent always falls where it would if the -o were still there. For elision, see rule 16.

11. **Compound words** are formed by simple juxtaposition of words (the main word stands at the end); the grammatical endings are also viewed as independent words.

12. When another **negative** word is present, the word ne is omitted.

13. To show **direction**, words take the accusative ending.

14. Every **preposition** has a definite and permanent meaning, but if we have to use a preposition and the direct meaning doesn’t tell us what preposition we should take, then we use the preposition je, which has no independent meaning. Instead of je the accusative without a preposition may be used.

15. The so-called **foreign words**, i.e. those taken by the majority of languages from one source, are used in Esperanto without change, taking on only the orthography of this language; but for different words from a single root it is better to use without change only the basic word, and form the rest from this latter according to the rules of Esperanto.

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


### 2.2 Writing and Pronunciation

**Alphabet:** a b c ĉ d e f g ĝ h ĥ i j ĵ k l m n o p r s š t u ĉ u v z

**Pronunciation:** c – [ts], ĉ – [tʃ], ĝ – [dʒ], ĥ – [x], ŝ – [ʒ], ū – [u] in diphthongs, other letters are as the same symbols in IPA

Two most common ways how to write without diacritics:

- Zamenhof’s proposal: To use letter ĥ instead of the circumflex and drop the hacek: ch, gh, hh, jh, sh, u
- To use letter x instead of the circumflex and the hacek: cx, gx, hx, jx, sx, ux. Unofficial but widely used in WWW.

Simply said, there are no phonological rules – write as you hear, say as you read.

### 2.3 Inflection

**Nouns:** -a, **Adjectives:** -a, **Verbs** -i, **Adverb** -e.
2.3.1 Basic nominal inflection

Accusative: -n  Plural: -j  Accusative plural: -jn
Mi vidas belan domon. – I see a nice house.
La belaj domoj estas tie. – The nice houses are over there.
Mi vidas belajn domojn. – I see nice houses.

2.3.2 Verb

Infinitive  -i: kapti – to catch, sidi – to sit

Vowels of tense
a – present tense, contemporaneous, imperfectness
mi kaptas – I catch, kaptanta – catching, kaptata – being caught
i – past tense, anteriority, perfectness
mi kaptis – I caught, kaptinta – having caught, kaptita – having been caught
o – future tense, succession, intention
mi kaptos – I will catch, kaptonta – going to catching, kaptota – going to be caught

Indicative  Vowels of tense + s
mi kapt-a-s – I catch, mi kapt-i-s – I caught, mi kapt-o-s – I will catch

Conditional  -us: mi kapt-us – I would catch

Imperative  -u: kaptu – catch, ni kaptu – let’s catch
Also used as subjunctive: Mi petas, ke li venu. – I ask that he comes.

Participles, Gerunds, Verbal nouns
vowel of tense + nt (active) / t (passive) + POS ending
kapt-a-nt-a – catching, kapt-i-nt-a – having caught, kapt-o-nt-a – going to catch
kapt-a-t-a – (being) caught, kapt-i-t-a – having been caught, kapt-o-t-a – going to be caught

Similarly verbal adverbs (gerunds) and verbal nouns.
kaptinto – one who is having catching, esperanto – one who hopes, abonanto – subscriber,
vizitanto – visitor, savonto – messiah, parolanto – speaker
kantanto – one who sings (at this moment) × kantisto – singer

Promentante ili kantas. – Walking, they are singing.
Pagonte li foriris. – He left before paying.
Kaptite ˆ si provas liberigi. – Having been caught, she is trying to free herself.

Complex verbal forms:  – esti + participle

- Imperfect: mi estas kaptanta – I am catching, mi estis kaptanta – I was catching
- Perfect: mi estas kaptinta – I have caught, mi estis kaptinta – I had caught
- Predicative: mi estas kaptonta – I am going to catch
- Complex infinitives: esti kaptonta – to be going to catch, esti kaptinta – to have caught
- Complex conditional/imperative: *mi estus kaptinta* – *I would have caught*
- Passive voice: *mi estas kaptata* – *I am caught, mi estus kaptata – I would be caught*

Note: Passive voice is very often replaced by simpler means:
- TFA: *La kato estis persekutata de la hundo.* = *La katon persekutis la hundo.* – *The cat was chased by the dog.*
- General subject: *La cervo estis pafita.* = *Oni pafis la cervon.* – *The deer was shot.*

Similarly complex tenses can be replaced by simple tenses plus adverbs, etc.

### 2.3.3 Comparison

Comparison forms of adjectives and adverbs are formed analytically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>comparative</th>
<th>superlative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>bona</em></td>
<td><em>iu</em></td>
<td><em>tia</em></td>
<td><em>kies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>good</em></td>
<td><em>some(body)</em></td>
<td><em>something</em></td>
<td><em>ies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>bone</em></td>
<td><em>every(body)</em></td>
<td><em>everything</em></td>
<td><em>ies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>well</em></td>
<td><em>all</em></td>
<td><em>nothing</em></td>
<td><em>nienie</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3.4 Correlatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>interrogative</th>
<th>demonstrative</th>
<th>indefinite</th>
<th>universal</th>
<th>negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>individual</td>
<td><em>kiu</em></td>
<td><em>tia</em></td>
<td><em>iu</em></td>
<td><em>ciu</em></td>
<td><em>neniu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who, which</td>
<td><em>that (one)</em></td>
<td><em>that thing</em></td>
<td><em>some</em></td>
<td><em>every</em></td>
<td><em>nobody</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thing</td>
<td><em>kio</em></td>
<td><em>tio</em></td>
<td><em>io</em></td>
<td><em>cio</em></td>
<td><em>nenio</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what</td>
<td><em>that thing</em></td>
<td><em>something</em></td>
<td><em>every</em></td>
<td><em>nothing</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality</td>
<td><em>kia</em></td>
<td><em>tia</em></td>
<td><em>ia</em></td>
<td><em>cia</em></td>
<td><em>nenia</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what kind of</td>
<td><em>that kind of</em></td>
<td><em>some kind of</em></td>
<td><em>every kind of</em></td>
<td><em>no kind of</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>possession</td>
<td><em>kies</em></td>
<td><em>ties</em></td>
<td><em>ies</em></td>
<td><em>cies</em></td>
<td><em>nenies</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whose</td>
<td><em>that one’s</em></td>
<td><em>some</em></td>
<td><em>everyone’s</em></td>
<td><em>everybody’s</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>place</td>
<td><em>kie</em></td>
<td><em>tie</em></td>
<td><em>ie</em></td>
<td><em>cie</em></td>
<td><em>nenie</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where</td>
<td><em>there</em></td>
<td><em>somewhere</em></td>
<td><em>everywhere</em></td>
<td><em>nowhere</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td><em>kiam</em></td>
<td><em>tiam</em></td>
<td><em>iam</em></td>
<td><em>ciam</em></td>
<td><em>nemiam</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when</td>
<td><em>then</em></td>
<td><em>sometimes</em></td>
<td><em>always</em></td>
<td><em>never</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cause</td>
<td><em>kil</em></td>
<td><em>tial</em></td>
<td><em>ial</em></td>
<td><em>cia</em></td>
<td><em>nemial</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>why</td>
<td><em>so</em></td>
<td><em>for some reas.</em></td>
<td><em>for every reas.</em></td>
<td><em>for no reas.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manner</td>
<td><em>kiel</em></td>
<td><em>tiel</em></td>
<td><em>iel</em></td>
<td><em>ciel</em></td>
<td><em>neniel</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how</td>
<td><em>thus</em></td>
<td><em>somehow</em></td>
<td><em>in every way</em></td>
<td><em>in no way</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quantity</td>
<td><em>kiom</em></td>
<td><em>tiom</em></td>
<td><em>iom</em></td>
<td><em>ciom</em></td>
<td><em>neniom</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how much</td>
<td><em>so much</em></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>some</em></td>
<td><em>all of it</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.3.5 Numerals


**Adverbial numerals** - *a:* *due* – for second time, second (in a list)

**Names of numbers** : - *o:* *duo* – number two
**Multiplication numerals**  -obl-
triobla – three as much, trioble – three times, trioblo – a triple, triobligi – to triple

**Fractions**  -on-
duono – half, duona – half (adj), duone – to the extend of one half, duonigi – to halve
La tanko estas duone malplena. – The tank is half-empty.

**Collectives**  -op-
duopa – having groups of two, duopo – a pair, marši kvarope – march in groups of four

2.3.6

2.4  Word building

Esperanto is a language with very rich word building.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>base</th>
<th>meaning</th>
<th>ending</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>laboro</td>
<td>work (n.)</td>
<td>-ena</td>
<td>laborious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labora</td>
<td>work (adj.), related to work</td>
<td>-ema</td>
<td>lazy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labore</td>
<td>by a work</td>
<td>-ulo</td>
<td>hard worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-isto</td>
<td>worker</td>
<td>-da</td>
<td>that has to be done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-ist-ino</td>
<td>female worker</td>
<td>-laboro</td>
<td>disgusting work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-ist-arvo</td>
<td>workers considered as a group</td>
<td>-ilo</td>
<td>a tool for a work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-ego</td>
<td>grand work</td>
<td>-re</td>
<td>rework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-aĵo</td>
<td>the thing concerned with a work</td>
<td>-ulo</td>
<td>worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-ebla</td>
<td>workable</td>
<td>-sen</td>
<td>unemployed person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ek-labori</td>
<td>to start to work</td>
<td>-tago</td>
<td>work day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-estro</td>
<td>the chief of the work</td>
<td>-tago</td>
<td>the work for the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labor-ejo</td>
<td>workshop, workplace</td>
<td>-ulo</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affixes – in fact short roots that are very common in composites. However, they can form words also alone, just by adding an ending.

**Examples of affixes:**
aĉ (inferior): hundo – dog → hundaĉo – cur, domaĉo – ugly house
eg (big): urbo – town → urbegi – city, dormi – to sleep → dormigi – to sleep deeply
et (small): urbo – town → urbeti – small town
um (just related): venti – wind → ventumi – to ventilate
igi (causative): blanka – white → blankigi – to make something white, dormi – sleep → dormigi – put to sleep
igi (to become): ruga – red → ruĝigi – to become red
ado (emphasizing the process): martelo – hammer → martelado – hammering → marteladi – use hammer often
eco (quality): riĉa – rich → riĉeco – richness, konfuzita – confused → konfuziteco – confusion
ido (offspring): hundo – dog → hundido – puppy, ideto - small young
ilo (tool): tranĉi – to cut → tranĉilo – tool for cutting, a knife
ino (female): patro – father → patrino – mother, bovo – cow → bovino - she-cow
ebla (able): legi – to read → legebla – readable, fari – to do → farebla – doable
ema (having tendency): labori – to work → laborema – industrious, dormi – to sleep → dormema – sleep
dis (different directions): iri – go → disiri – to go in different direction
etc.

2.5 Syntax

2.5.1 Agreement

• Agreement inside of a nominal phrase. All immediate participants (except article) of
a nominal phrase have to agree in case and number.
Mi havas grandan domon. – I have a big house.
Mi havas grandajn domojn. – I have big houses.

• Agreement with subject. Simple form of the verb is the same for all persons, but
predicative adjective has to agree with subject (including participle in complex verb
tenses):
La studentoj estas diligentaj. – The students are diligent.
Ni estas kaptantaj. – We are catching.

2.6 Word order

So called free word order language. The word order in Esperanto is used to distinguish topic
and focus (subject and object are distinguished by nominative and accusative).
Kion mordis la hundo? – Who was bit by the dog?
La hundo mordis la knabon. (subject - predicate - object) – The dog bit the boy.
Kiu mordis la knabon? – Who bit the boy?
La knabon mordis la hundo. (O - P - S.) – The boy was bit by the dog.
Kion faris la hundo al la knabo? – What did the dog do to the boy?
La hundo la knabon mordis. (S - O - P) – It was biting, what the dog did to the boy.
There are some limitation of this freedom prepositions have to stand before its noun, adverb
has to precede the word it modifies, etc.[41]

2.7 Questions

The yes/no questions are formed from indicative sentences by using particle ĉu at the be-
ginning of the sentence:
Ĉu vi havas domon? – Do you have a house?
The question-word question are created by using an interrogative correlative:
Kion vi faras? – What do you do?
Kiam vi alvenas? – When do you arrive?
3 Resources

http://www.ling.ohio-state.edu/ hana/esr/index.html - My page about Esperanto
http://www.esperanto.net/veb/faq.html – Esperanto FAQ
http://members.aol.com/sylvanz/gvcont.htm – Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village

