

Esperanto

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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 Boulogne-sur-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 Eastern 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, Mein 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.

See also: <http://steve-and-pattie.com/esperantujo/gram-16.html>

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 ŝ t u ŭ v z

Pronunciation: c – [ts], ĉ – [tʃ], ĝ – [dʒ], ĥ – [x], ŝ – [ʃ], ŭ – [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 *h* 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: *-o*, 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 ŝi provas liberiĝi. – 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.

| | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------|
| positive | <i>bona</i> | <i>good</i> | <i>bone</i> | <i>well</i> |
| comparative | <i>pli bona</i> | <i>better</i> | <i>pli bone</i> | <i>better</i> |
| superlative | <i>la plej bona</i> | <i>the best</i> | <i>plej bone</i> | <i>best</i> |

2.3.4 Correlatives

| | interrogative | demonstrative | indefinite | universal | negative |
|------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| individual | kiu who, which | tiu that (one) | iu some(body) | ĉiu every(body), all | neniu nobody, no |
| thing | kio what | tio that thing | io something | ĉio everything | nenio nothing |
| quality | kia what kind of | tia that kind of | ia some kind of | ĉia every kind of | nenia no kind of |
| possession | kies whose | ties that one's | ies someone's | ĉies everyone's | nenies nobody's |
| place | kie where | tie there | ie somewhere | ĉie everywhere | nenie nowhere |
| time | kiam when | tiam then | iam sometime | ĉiam always | neniam never |
| cause | kial why | tial so | ial for some reas. | ĉial for every reas. | nenial for no reas. |
| manner | kiel how | tiel thus | iel somehow | ĉiel in every way | neniel in no way |
| quantity | kiom how much | tiom so much | iom some | ĉiom all of it | neniom no amount |

2.3.5 Numerals

nul – 0, *unu* – 1, *du* – 2, *tri* – 3, *kvar* – 4, *kvin* – 5, *ses* – 6, *sep* – 7, *ok* – 8, *naŭ* – 9

dek – 10, *cent* – 100, *mil* – 1000

dek unu – 11, *dudek* – 20, *dudek kvin* – 25, *cent kvin* – 105, *trimil naŭcent tridek ok* – 3938

Ordinal numerals -a: *dua* – second, *mil-kvincent-sesdek-tria* – 1563rd

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, *trioblighi* – to triple

Fractions -on-

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

Collectives -op-

duopa – having groups of two, *duopo* – a pair, *marŝi kvarope* – march in groups of four

2.3.6

2.4 Word building

Esperanto is a language with very rich word building.

| | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| <i>laboro</i> | – work (n.) | <i>labor-ema</i> | – laborious |
| <i>labora</i> | – work (adj.), related to work | <i>mal-labor-ema</i> | – lazy |
| <i>labore</i> | – by a work | <i>labor-em-ulo</i> | – hard worker |
| <i>labor-isto</i> | – worker | <i>labor-en-da</i> | – that has to be done |
| <i>labor-ist-ino</i> | – female worker | <i>fi-laboro</i> | – disgusting work |
| <i>labor-ist-aro</i> | – workers considered as a group | <i>labor-ilo</i> | – a tool for a work |
| <i>labor-ego</i> | – grand work | <i>re-labori</i> | – rework |
| <i>labor-ajo</i> | – the thing concerned with a work | <i>labor-ulo</i> | – worker |
| <i>labor-ebla</i> | – workable | <i>sen-labor-ulo</i> | – unemployed person |
| <i>ek-labori</i> | – to start to work | <i>labor-tago</i> | – work day |
| <i>labor-estro</i> | – the chief of the work | <i>tag-laboro</i> | – the work for the day |
| <i>labor-ejo</i> | – workshop, workplace | | |

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 → *urbego* – city, *dormi* – to sleep → *dormegi* – to sleep deeply

et (small): *urbo* – town → *urbeto* – small town

um (just related): *vento* – wind → *ventumi* – to ventilate

igi (causative): *blanka* – white → *blankigi* – to make something white, *dormi* – sleep → *dormigi* – put to sleep

iĝi (to become): *ruĝa* – red → *ruĝiĝi* – to become red

ado (emphasizing the process): *martelo* – hammer → *martelado* – hammering → *marteladi* – use hammer often

eco (quality): *riĉa* – rich → *riĉ(ec)o* – richness, *konfuzita* – confused → *konfuziteco* – confusedness

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

mal (opposite): aperi – appear → malaperi – disappear, granda – big → malgranda – small
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.

Miaj belaj hundoj kuras en la gardeno. – *My nice dogs are running in the garden.*

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).

Kiu 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 beginning 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://steve-and-pattie.com/esperantujo/index-en.html>

<http://www.esperanto.net/veb/faq.html> – Esperanto FAQ

<http://www.bertilow.com/pmeg/index.php> – PMEG

<http://www.suite101.com/subjectheadings/contents.cfm/928> - Series of articles by David Poulson at Suite101.com

<http://members.aol.com/sylvanz/gvcont.htm> – Esperanto: A Language for the Global Village

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