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From the *introduction* by Cyril Robert Brosch & Sabine Fiedler (translated)

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Louis von Wunsch-Rolshoven presents in a very detailed collection of documents arranged according to topics, which false ideas about planned languages and/or Esperanto can be found with some partly prominent linguists also still in the recent past. These are partly minor misunderstandings, partly blatantly untruthful misrepresentations. The author brings to each case a correction proven in detail by sources and considers, how a mixture of wrong tradition and omission of the examination of the evidence could lead to the fact that some misunderstandings are still found today.

On the image of Esperanto from the point of view of some linguists

About various untrue statements
on Esperanto and its language community

*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*
William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act 1, Scene V

*Besides, as the vilest Writer has his Readers, so the greatest Liar has his Believers;
and it often happens, that if a Lie be believ'd only for an Hour, it has done its Work,
and there is no farther occasion for it.*

*Falsehood flies, and the Truth comes limping after it; so that when Men come to be
undeceiv'd, it is too late; the Jest is over, and the Tale has had its Effect...*

Jonathan Swift, 1710¹

This article presents a number of erroneous assertions made about Esperanto by linguists, especially about its practice and language community, as well as some true representations. The collection draws mainly from interviews with linguists appearing in the press, from online discussions involving linguists, and from short mentions of Esperanto in articles or books. Among these errors are the assumptions that there exist no Esperanto language community, no native speakers or only a few of them, no Esperanto authors, and no works in Esperanto, as well as the idea that there is no wordplay in Esperanto (all of these characteristics are present in Esperanto). In light of these erroneous assumptions regarding Esperanto, some of which have spread to the public, “Esperanto” is understood in different ways by different people. The author therefore suggests a distinction between “Esperanto A” (the language as it exists) and “Esperanto B” (the sum of these errors). Communication requires at least a semblance of agreement on how notions are defined, and it is therefore helpful to ensure at the beginning that all parties have at least a basic knowledge about Esperanto and its language community.

La artikolo prezentas diversajn malĝustajn asertojn de lingvistoj pri Esperanto kaj speciale pri ĝia lingvo-praktiko kaj lingvo-komunumo; aldone enestas kelkaj ĝustaj prezentoj. La kolekto devenas ĉefe el intervjuoj de lingvistoj, kiuj aperis en amaskomunikiloj, el demandoj al ili en la interreto kaj el mallongaj mencioj de Esperanto en artikoloj aŭ libroj. Inter la eraroj troviĝas interalie la supozo, ke ne ekzistus Esperanto-lingvokomunumo, ne ekzistus denaskuloj aŭ nur tre malmultaj, ne ekzistus

¹ The Examiner, 1710 November 2 to November 9, Number 15, [Article by Jonathan Swift], Quote Page 2, Column 1, Printed for John Morphew, near Stationers-Hall, London. Google Books <http://books.google.com/books?id=KigTAAAAQAAJ&q=%22Truth+comes%22#v=snippet>

Esperanto-aŭtoroj nek verkoj en Esperanto kaj ankaŭ la ideo, ke ne ekzistus vortludoj en Esperanto (ĉio tio ekzistas). Pro tiuj malĝustaj asertoj, kiuj parte disvastiĝis ankaŭ en la ĝenerala publiko, la vorto »Esperanto« estas komprenata malsame; pro tio la aŭtoro sugestas distingi inter »Esperanto A« (la reale ekzistanta) kaj »Esperanto B« (la sumo de la malĝustaĵoj). Komunikado bezonas almenaŭ simile difinitajn nociojn; pro tio estas helpe, se oni komence certigas, ke ĉiuj flankoj disponas almenaŭ pri baza scio pri Esperanto kaj ĝia lingvokomunumo.

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1 Introduction

What we know, what we perceive of the world, is the basis of our world view and our decisions. We rely on true information to make appropriate decisions. However, we cannot verify everything we are told; in many cases, we have little choice but to believe the information providers, sometimes just because of the available time. In particular, scientists enjoy the confidence that they provide verified and true information, both within the sciences and in the general public. Entire areas of science also deal with the question of what is true and how true information can be found and secured. If, on the other hand, scientists give information to the general public that turns out to be false, on the one hand the image of society about the subject being treated will be impaired; on the

other hand, the scientists of the concerned field of science and perhaps also scientists as a whole are in danger of losing trust and prestige.

In this article, some statements by linguists on fundamental characteristics and facts concerning Esperanto and its linguistic community are presented, statements which deviate from the observable reality; opinions on Esperanto, on the other hand, are only marginally touched upon, as well as the adoption of the presented statements by others. The statements are mostly concerned with quite essential facts about Esperanto, of which it is basically easy to check whether they are true or not - for example the question whether there are authors who write in Esperanto, whether there are Esperanto native speakers or whether there are word games in Esperanto. At first about 10,000 Esperanto books have appeared, of which about one third are fiction books and again one third of these are original works;² secondly it is estimated that there are about one thousand to two thousand native speakers;³ thirdly, Raymond Schwartz became known in the 1920s with his Parisian cabaret *Verda Kato* (Green Cat), who used many Esperanto word games in his texts and also filled a few books with them, e.g. *Verdkata Testamento* (1926).⁴

The spreading of inaccuracies about Esperanto very often also means to degrade the reputation of the language Esperanto, the speakers of Esperanto and the worldwide Esperanto language community. It makes sense that a broader public learns about the incorrectness of these statements - also to correct their own ideas about the language. The image of Esperanto, which has been drawn by wide circles of linguists, has apparently spread in large parts of society. Probably even linguists should consider to consult a Wikipedia article on Esperanto as well as a few of the sources given there before making statements on Esperanto.

The assumptions about the practice of Esperanto listed here and other similar untrue assumptions about Esperanto seem to have led some linguists to assume that Esperanto is not a language, not a living language or not a "real" language. However, no scientifically proven sources are known for such assumptions.

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- 2 Cf. for this the statistics on Esperanto books, https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistiko_de_Esperantujo#Libroj, as well as the numbers on Esperanto books, which Aleksander Korĵenkov (2017) has compiled in the article "Nia libroproduktado en la 2016a jaro". According to Korĵenkov, out of 4991 books and brochures that were included in the book shop of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) between 1991 and 2016, 592 were to be assigned to the field of original fiction and 1025 to the field of translated fiction, i.e. a total of about one third of fiction (1617 fiction of a total of 4991 books). In the table in the Wikipedia-"Statistiko de Esperantujo", https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistiko_de_Esperantujo#Libroj the values of queries in the catalogue of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) on the number of Esperanto-publications of at least 49 pages (UNESCO-Definition for "book") were entered between 1987 and 2016; these values fluctuate around an average value of about 120. In connection with the statistics published there on the number of publications since 1887 ("Livres édités en espéranto de 1887 à 1986, reçus par la Bibliothèque Hodler (Rotterdam)"; larger number of book publications since about 1906) it results that ten thousand Esperanto books since 1887 is a good order of magnitude.
 - 3 Renato Corsetti (1996: 265) writes of nearly 300 registered Esperanto speaking couples and families (283 in January 1995); usually in these families the children learn Esperanto as their mother tongue (this suggests around 400 native speakers in the families up to the age of about eighteen at this time). Corsetti, Pinto and Tolomeo (2004) write about estimates of a thousand Esperanto-speaking families in the world; they inform of „third- and even fourth-generation Esperanto speakers“. Harald Haarmann (2001) writes that Esperanto is also learned as a mother tongue by several thousand people in the world (e.g. in Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Japan, USA).
 - 4 The word plays were studied by Marie-Térèse Lloancy (1985) in her dissertation: *Esperanto et jeu de mots dans l'œuvre de Raymond Schwartz (1894-1973)*. See also Lloancy (1994), *Per humuro al maturo: Schwartz 100-jara*.

Of course, there is no uniform picture of Esperanto and one cannot conclude from an isolated statement on Esperanto what other ideas the person has on Esperanto. This collection of untrue statements about Esperanto also can not give a clear quantitative picture about the distribution of incorrect ideas about Esperanto among linguists. However, a short telephone survey conducted by the author among four linguistic assistants at different German universities in July 2016 revealed that all four scientists questioned agreed with the untrue statement "There are no Esperanto native speakers". It has also become known from two introductory lectures on linguistics in Germany and France that Esperanto was said not to be a language or that artificial languages like Esperanto would not live; in a third case, presumably in winter 2017/18, according to information from the audience of an introductory course on linguistics in Germany, Esperanto was said not to be a "language" but only a "communication system".

The examples of untrue information about Esperanto compiled here come largely from statements by linguists *outside* the Esperanto-related literature (interviews with journalists, contributions to discussions, answers to questions about Esperanto in an Internet forum "Ask a linguist", marginal mentions of Esperanto in essays or books on other topics). Sabine Fiedler (2015), for her part, has examined „The topic of planned languages (Esperanto) in the current specialist literature“. Detlev Blanke (2014) also mentions what he kindly calls ‚misunderstandings‘ („Missverständnisse“), on the basis of three examples from works about language policy as well as another example from an EU document on multilingualism which shows a missing knowledge of the Esperanto culture.

In his text "Some Comments on Ignorance About Esperanto" (published in 2002, following Google), the interpreter and psychologist Claude Piron compiles a series of statements on Esperanto (from an Internet forum entitled "Ask a linguist") which according to him are untrue and he concludes: "The amount of untruths to be found in linguistic publications on Esperanto (as on Chinese) is appalling. All the more so since they're formulated in good faith. Isn't it an interesting socio-psychological phenomenon?" The group "The Linguist List", an "International Linguistics Community Online", offered (at least in the years 2001 to 2007) to answer questions on linguistics under the title "Ask a linguist". At least five of the questions answered on this platform concerned Esperanto; they each received four to six answers, a total of 24, from about 14 different linguists. In a second text, Claude Piron (2006)⁵ collected and analyzed many of these answers. Even if one does not agree with the psychological and other interpretations of Piron - the collection (in the appendix of Piron 2006 and on linguistlist.org) is helpful to understand the image of Esperanto among English-speaking linguists at that time around 2005. The answers are partly right, partly wrong; some of them are mentioned in the following true and untrue statements.⁶

5 A year of publication is found in the text itself, "aujourd'hui (2006)" (today, 2006); the Google search also indicates 2006 for the Internet publication of the main text. The appendix to Piron's article also contains answers of "Ask a linguist" from 2007; these were probably added later.

6 Further answers can be found in Foster (2001) and at <https://linguistlist.org/ask-ling/message-details1.cfm?asklingid=200308872> , <http://linguistlist.org/ask-ling/message-details1.cfm?asklingid=200323372> , <https://linguistlist.org/ask-ling/message-details1.cfm?asklingid=200358248> and <http://linguistlist.org/ask-ling/message-details1.cfm?asklingid=200390733> on the Internet at the bottom of each page as a link. It is obvious that some of the responding linguists merely reproduce the rumors about Esperanto that they have heard. This can be seen by the fact that the answers are partially contradictory; the reason is that other linguists have done research before they answered.

According to the general impression from the collection presented in this article, it would come as no surprise if a quantitative study still to be carried out would prove that a considerable part of the linguists of a certain country had ideas on Esperanto and on its language community, which deviate in essential points from the verifiable reality.

The collection offers only an excerpt, essentially results from various Internet searches on Esperanto (often in an effort to record as far as possible what appeared in the press and other media on Esperanto); most of the finds are accidental.

Textbooks in linguistics have nearly not been searched for statements on Esperanto;⁷ a systematic examination of such general textbooks, in English, French and other languages, on how they present Esperanto would certainly be helpful to know what linguists in their majority know or accept about Esperanto.

In addition to misrepresentations, there are also unobjective statements. For example, a German professor of English Studies wrote in the so-called SciLogs of Spektrum.de in 2012 about the ‚tiresome Esperanto that cannot be killed‘ which ‚has a worldwide audience of a mere million speakers‘.⁸ [The German expression „nicht tot zu kriegen“ usually means that the author would like something to die, but regrets that it has not been possible to achieve this. ###] In a later blog entry he stated that he meant in the context of the discussion about a world language that the idea was ‚tiresome and cannot be killed‘, that ‚Esperanto would in any way be particularly well suited to take over the role of such a world language‘ (Stefanowitsch 2012b)⁹. He also claimed that Esperanto would be ‚about as interesting for linguistics as a cement garden is for ecology‘. ‚This means: largely uninteresting, except perhaps where nature penetrates the artificial order.‘¹⁰ The linguistic literature on Esperanto shows that these ideas are not shared by experts.

Humphrey Tonkin (2015: 183) believes that those scientists who research Esperanto are often caught in a »variation of the anthropologist’s dilemma, or the double-bind: if they have learned this voluntary language, they must have lost their objectivity, say the critics, and are therefore disqualified from commenting on it; if they have not learned the language, they lack adequate information to pronounce on it ... and are therefore disqualified.« Tonkin goes on to write that he knows of more than one promising study on Esperanto, which was abandoned on the advice of colleagues because they were sceptical about Esperanto.

7 In 2004, a discussion participant named Jonathan Badger wrote in the Internet discussion (beginning with "Lau la vidpunkto") at <https://soc.culture.esperanto.narkive.com/siOoR0oG/esperanto-en-la-televideo#post16> that from the point of view of standard linguistics, planned languages are only stupidities of madmen who are not worth investigating. It would be sufficient to read any textbook. (Original in Esperanto, translated by the author of this text as nearly all quotes. „Lau la vidpunkto de norma lingvistiko, planlingvoj estas nur stultajhoj de frenezuloj kaj do ne meritas studon. Simple legu iun ajn lernlibron.“)

8 Original: das »leidige, nicht totzukriegende Esperanto«, das es »weltweit auf eine schlappe Million Sprecher/innen« bringe; Stefanowitsch 2012a)

9 Original: Ich habe es im Kontext der Diskussion um eine „Welthilfssprache“ — eigentlich um eine Weltsprache — als „leidig und nicht totzukriegen“ bezeichnet. Ich meinte damit, dass die Idee „leidig und nicht totzukriegen“ ist, das Esperanto sei in irgendeiner Weise besonders gut dazu geeignet, die Rolle einer solchen Weltsprache zu übernehmen (tatsächlich liegt mir auch am Esperanto selbst nicht viel, aber dazu gleich noch mehr).

10 Original: Esperanto sei für die Sprachwissenschaft „ungefähr so interessant“, „wie ein Zementgarten für die Ökologie“. „Will heißen: Weitgehend uninteressant, außer vielleicht dort, wo die Natur in die künstliche Ordnung eindringt.“

Perhaps there is a problem not only in the way described by Tonkin. It is conceivable that works on Esperanto receive little attention even without argumentation on the authors' knowledge of Esperanto, because outsiders believe in the above-mentioned untrue statements about the language. Why should a linguist deal with work on something that is publicly referred to as a "non-language" by a well-known colleague (Trabant 2008), a means of communication that has neither authors nor works nor native speakers (Cassin 2017) and is so incomplete that it has "no word plays" (Wisnmann 2016)? How could a linguist or a layman come up with the idea that such statements are all untrue despite the reputation of their authors?¹¹ Some of the untrue statements have remained uncorrected to this day.¹²

A dilemma of the kind described by Tonkin seems not to arise if there is no argumentation for Esperanto or for a more official role of the language Esperanto. It is also possible and helpful to inform only about Esperanto and its present language community - about its use, its recognition in many places as well as about texts in and about Esperanto; here the mention of the existence of Esperanto families and native speakers seems to be particularly important as well as the presentation of the core language community of those for whom Esperanto has become the main language, which they use more than their other languages.¹³

When someone makes untrue statements about Esperanto, it is often sufficient to ask for sources and evidence.¹⁴

Perhaps the time is not yet ripe for a language-political discussion including Esperanto - perhaps it is first necessary for language politicians, linguists and other scientists to achieve a reasonably realistic knowledge of the current state of Esperanto and its language community. This would include that Esperanto would be recognised as a "real" language by a large majority of linguists.¹⁵

2 Dissemination and use of Esperanto

First a few impressions of the increasing spread of Esperanto. Young S. Kim (1999) examined the number of active international Esperanto organisations from 1905 to 1984; apart from a decline

11 It is remarkable, that for most of these statements it becomes apparent in just a few minutes of an Internet search that they are not true.

12 It seems that we live in a culture where the freedom to publish false assertions is more important than the truth.

13 In a Facebook survey which began on July 17, 2018, a total of 88 people reported up to May 4, 2019 that they used Esperanto in more than 50% of their time during the last 12 months. Up to August 31, 2018 the number was 76 persons. Article on <http://esperantoland.org/de/plu.php?msgid=1241> ### (eble indas revizii la anglan version tie, ĉu?)

14 Unfortunately, an indication of a factual error always seems in danger of hurting the author. To a request by email in a case with two essential false statements, "Could you please tell me where the information in these two half-sentences came from? That would be very friendly", came the answer, "after manifold and partly aggressive criticism from your ranks", "the whole passage about Esperanto will be deleted from the next edition of the book". On the one hand it seems recommendable to formulate criticism about false information as mildly as possible. On the other hand, an alternative can be seen here: Either Esperanto is reported negatively or the author does not want to mention it at all.

15 It seems it has not yet been investigated exactly which information and assessments on Esperanto are widespread among language scientists today and to what extent.

between 1910 and 1913, probably caused by the popularity of the planned language Ido at that time, this curve points steadily upwards, from about 8 organisations in 1913 to about 65 in 1984.¹⁶

The world wars may have limited the scope of the activity, but obviously it did not come to a standstill; the number of active organisations remained approximately constant in these years.

The
Universal
Esperanto

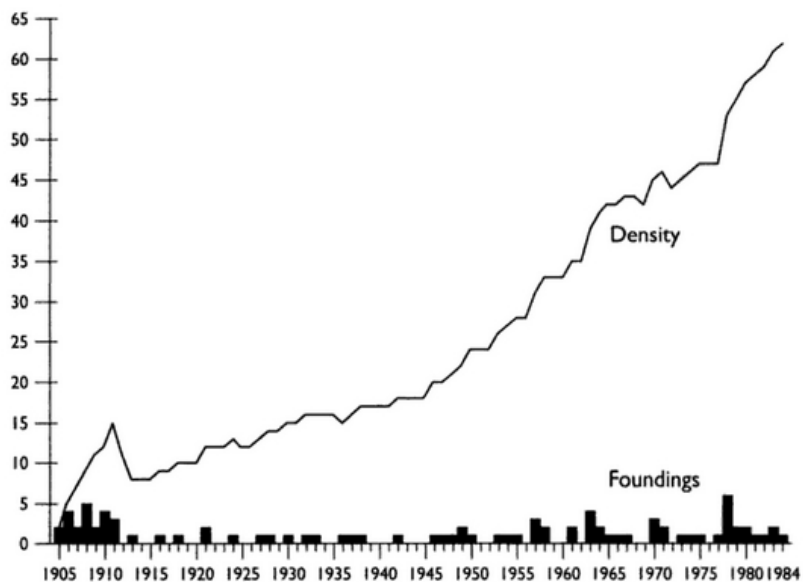


FIGURE 5.1. Foundings and density of Esperanto INGOs, 1905–1984. Density is the number of organizations active in each year.

Figure 1: Number of active International Esperanto Organizations (INGOs) 1905-1984 (Density; below is the number of new organizations). Source: Kim (1999: 129)

Association had about 19 national member associations in 1948. In the course of the decades, the number increased quite evenly to 71 national member associations today. Of these, 38 are in Europe, 12 in America, 8 in Africa, 11 in Asia and 2 in Australia/Oceania. In some more countries there are national Esperanto organizations which are not member of the Universal Esperanto Association.

¹⁶ Unfortunately there are no newer statistics available. This would also be more difficult nowadays, since international cooperation often takes place on Internet pages and the like, without formal organization by an association.

Also the number of

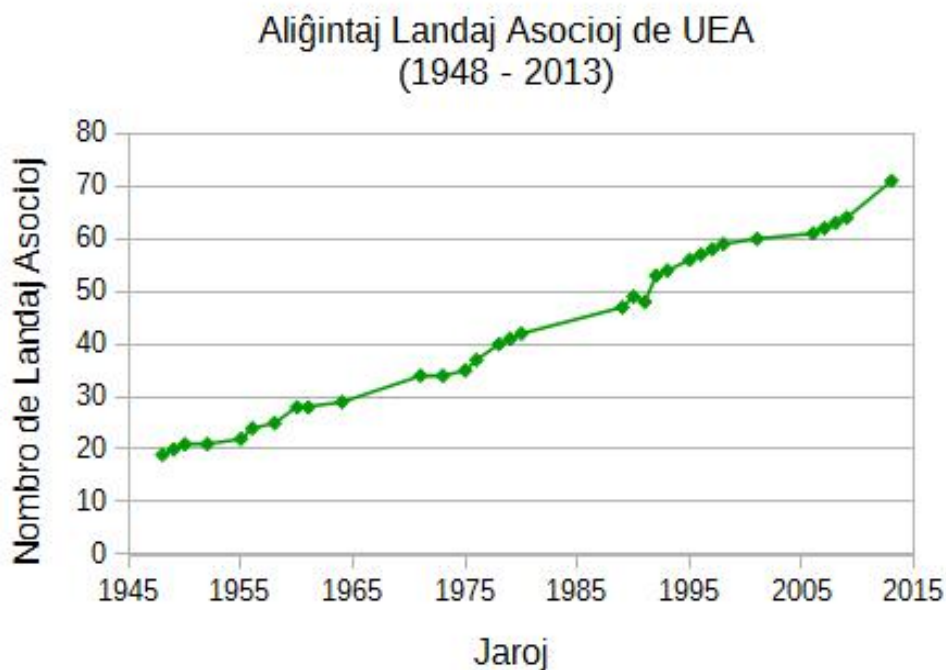


Figure 2: Number of national member associations of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) 1948 – 2013; Source: Wikipedia, https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landaj_asocioj_de_UEA#Listo_de_aktualaj_landaj_asocioj_de_UEA; graph created by the author

participants of one-week international Esperanto events in Germany (and Poland, only one event) shows an increase. Until 1975 there was only one such event, the *Internacia Seminario* of the German Esperanto Youth, with usually 50 to 100 participants. In the years after 1980 further events were added, so that around 2008 a total of about one thousand participants were counted in seven Esperanto events.

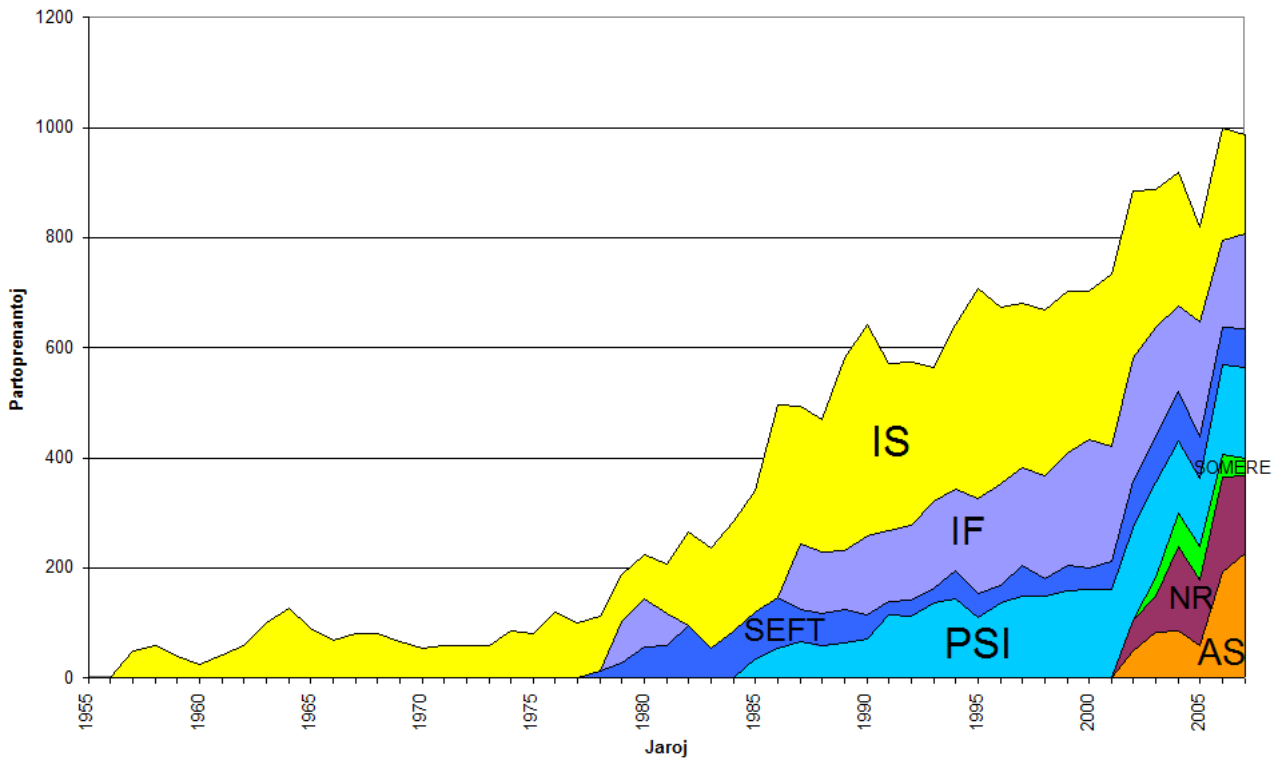


Figure 3: Number of participants in Esperanto gatherings of at least one week in Germany (with one gathering in Poland, AS, Aktivula Semajno); source: Wikipedia, https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistiko_de_Esperantujo#Renkonti%C4%9Doj; numbers collected by the author

In the past fifty years or so, in addition to the indicated increase in the areas of worldwide distribution and Esperanto events, there has also been a measurable numerical increase in the areas of, for example, music, native speakers, the Internet and interlinguistic publications.¹⁷

2.1 Increasing recognition and use

In 1990 the Catholic Church approved esperanto-language mass texts; in 1993 the international writers' association PEN accepted the Esperanto PEN Centre as a member. In 1997, the University of Poznań (Poland) established an interlinguistics course as a distance learning postgraduate course; also in 1997, a Chair of Interlinguistics and Esperantology was established in Amsterdam; from 1966 to about 2006, Esperantology could be studied in Budapest. In 2000, Esperanto was admitted to Hungarian universities as a language of choice for foreign language certificates in Hungary; since

¹⁷ For the music, see the list of Esperanto musical albums in Wikipedia <https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esperanto-muzikalbumoj> (1960 to 1969: 4 music albums; 2000 to 2009: over 100 music albums). In 1957 there were 154 children reported growing up with Esperanto as one of their mother tongues; in 2004, as mentioned, the number is estimated at about two thousand (Corsetti, Pinto and Tolomeo, 2004). The presence on the Internet is partly described in the following text. With regard to the interlinguistic publications cf. for instance the Bibliography of Theses and Dissertations on Esperanto and Interlinguistics by Symoens (1989); between 1906 and 1971 about 28 such works appeared, i.e. one about every second or third year; between 1975 and 1987 a total of 95 works appeared, thus since 1975 it was about seven every year. Example of a bibliographic entry: <https://edukado.net/biblioteko/diplomlaborajhoj?iid=294> (viewed 10. 8. 2018)

then, more than 38,000 state-recognized Esperanto examinations have been taken in Hungary.¹⁸ Since 2001 the China Internet Information Center has been posting news in Esperanto on esperanto.china.org.cn every working day, mainly, but not only, about China. Since 2002 the monthly magazine "Le Monde Diplomatique" publishes translations of articles in Esperanto. In 2008, Esperanto language tests began according to the Common European Framework of Reference, which is coordinated by the Council of Europe.¹⁹

The Esperanto Wikipedia offers about a quarter of a million articles in Esperanto, about as much as the Danish, Slovak or Croatian version.²⁰ Since 2010 there is an Esperanto-language, machine-translated version of the English Wikipedia, WikiTrans, which currently contains about 5 million articles.²¹ Google Translate offers translations for Esperanto since 2012. In 2014, Esperanto "as a carrier of the Esperanto culture" was placed on the Polish list of intangible cultural heritage. In 2019, the Esperanto tradition also in Croatia received the status of an intangible cultural heritage.²²

The quite popular language course provider Duolingo included Esperanto in its program in 2015, initially for an English language course; the Spanish version followed in 2016, the Portuguese version in 2018. Up to July 2018, about 1.7 million learners have registered for an Esperanto language course with Duolingo; a bit more than 800,000 new learners register each year; about 5% of them finish the course.²³ Other language providers have also included Esperanto in their program; among the free providers, Esperanto is usually found when they offer at least 25 languages.²⁴

The Hungarian census asks also about knowledge in foreign languages. In 1941 they found 942 people indicating Esperanto knowledge, in 1990 the number was 2,083, in 2001 it was 4,575 and in 2011 a total of 8,397 people informed to be able to speak Esperanto (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal. 2004 and 2011 or later). Considering the number of more than 38,000 people who passed an official Esperanto language test in Hungary between 2001 and 2018, mentioned above, the real number may be higher.

The overall impression is that the use of Esperanto increased in many areas by about 5 % a year, with large differences. This is similar to the spread of English following the estimations collected and made by David Crystal (2006: 424, Table 9.1): Quirk (1962: 6) estimated a number of 100

18 Numbers and sources on https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statistiko_de_Esperantujo#Hungario

19 Sources for the individual items of information in this and the following sections on https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historio_de_Esperanto#Ekde_1980 (as of 10 Aug. 2018), if not specifically stated.

20 30 April 2019: 257 813 articles according to <http://eo.wikipedia.org>. Information on other language versions of Wikipedia can be found at https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias#100_000.2B_articles.

21 <https://epo.wikitrans.net/>

22 http://niematerialne.nid.pl/Dziedzictwo_niematerialne/Krajowa_inwentaryzacja/Krajowa_lista_NDK/ and http://esperanto.hr/nematerijalno_kult_dobro_esper_2019.pdf

23 The sum of about 800,000 results from the information on <https://www.duolingo.com/courses/en> , <https://www.duolingo.com/courses/es> and <https://www.duolingo.com/courses/pt> (30 April 2019: 330K + 305K + 187mil = 822,000). Information on the total number of learners to date was available on these pages until July 2018. The figure of about 5% is based on information from Chuck Smith, the leader of the Esperanto course team there, which he received from Duolingo staff.

To compare with the past: Tišljar (1997: 149), a reprint of an article in *Esperanto-Revuo* (revuo *Esperanto?*) 2/1983, reports of a survey made by him and others around 1980 which led to the conclusion that in the twelve countries USA, Israel, Malta, France, Yugoslavia, Spain, Finland, Austria, Germany, Italy, Soviet Union and Sweden there were between 9,000 and 20,000 Esperanto learners. Maybe a bit courageously he estimates that in the whole world between 50 and 100 thousand people learned Esperanto at that time.

24 See the list of language learning sites at https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Listo_de_ofertataj_Esperanto-lerniloj

million people speaking English as their second or foreign language. Between 1985 and 1993 the estimations were between 300 and 400 million people; if we take an increase from 100 to 400 million between 1962 and e. g. 1990, we get around 5.1 %. If we add the estimation by Crystal for 2006 („current“) of 1,000 million people for English as a second or foreign language, we get a mean of 5.4 % for these 44 years. Certainly there were periods of higher growth as in Eastern Europe between 1990 and 2000, but that was an exceptional situation.²⁵

If we would like to speculate about the further development of Esperanto learning and speaking, we certainly should know two things: How many people will be informed in the future about the current use of Esperanto and the real situation of the Esperanto speaking community? Will internet sites give sufficient support for people to learn and then use Esperanto? It is probably too early to know the answers.

3 True Presentations of Esperanto

The starting point for this work was the observation that a large number of linguists made statements about Esperanto that deviated blatantly from the reality to be observed. The image that these linguists have of Esperanto and its linguistic and cultural community (or its alleged non-existence) and the view they spread is incorrect in essential points; thus it is doubtful what it is worth evaluating Esperanto on the basis of such assumptions. The aim of this work is to convey to Esperanto speakers, to linguists and to the public the assumptions on which the general picture of Esperanto is presumably based to a large extent - a picture that is often rather negative. It should make little sense to talk about Esperanto without taking note of the existence of these untrue assumptions.

On the other hand, it should not be overlooked that many linguists have carefully dealt with Esperanto and have therefore presented Esperanto realistically. Umberto Eco (1995) should be mentioned here, who wrote some pages on Esperanto in a neutral or positive basic tone in his work "The Search for the Perfect Language". Umberto Eco also quotes the linguist Antoine Meillet, who wrote already in 1918 (p. 268): "Toute discussion théorique est vaine : L'Espéranto a fonctionné." (Any theoretical discussion is in vain: Esperanto worked.)

It should not be overlooked that the early occupation with constructing languages by J. R. R. Tolkien was accompanied by his study of Esperanto, that he wrote a short text in Esperanto (1909) and that he engaged in two texts in favor of Esperanto (e.g. 1932).

Edward Sapir wrote several times about constructed languages and remarked (1933: 168): „The supposed artificiality of such a language as Esperanto or of any of the equivalent languages that have been proposed has been absurdly exaggerated, for in sober truth there is practically nothing in these languages that is not taken from the common stock of words and forms which have gradually developed in Europe.“

25 To give an idea: In Hungary the number of people speaking English as a foreign language went from 228,956 in 1990 to 941,139 in 2001, according to the Hungarian Central Statistics Office, an increase by 13.7% in the mean. For 2011 the number was 1,356,307, so the increase during this second period was 3.7% in the mean. (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2011 or later)

David Crystal (: 425) correctly describes Esperanto and mentions international conferences, journals, translated literature as well as extensive original work, radio broadcasts and estimations about the number of fluent speakers (they „tend to fall between 1 and 2 million“).

The phonetician Max Mangold, who also wrote the German Duden pronunciation dictionary, spoke Esperanto and in 1976 published ‚Linguistic considerations on the question of the easy learnability of Esperanto‘ ("Sprachwissenschaftliche Überlegungen zur Frage der leichten Erlernbarkeit des Esperanto").

Harald Haarmann (2001) lists Esperanto in his book "Kleines Lexikon der Sprachen" (Small lexicon of languages) and mentions, among other things, that in some cases it is already a second or even third generation mother tongue. (This is the case, for example, in the family of the former German ambassador in Moscow, Ulrich Brandenburg).

The Heidelberg sinologist Gotelind Müller-Saini researches and publishes, among other things, on the use of Esperanto in 20th century China; one of her texts is quoted below.

In his book "Lagom finns bara i Sverige" the Swedish linguist Mikael Parkvall (2009) confronts some linguistic myths, including the idea that Esperanto is not a functioning language.

G. R. Sampson (2001), Professor of Natural Language Computing, University of Sussex, Brighton, in the aforementioned forum "Ask a linguist" answered a question about "negativities in esperanto"; he does not see major failings to it. On the question of the frequently mentioned "Eurocentrism" of Esperanto (regarding vocabulary), he points out that „it is only European languages of which people in distant parts of the world tend to encounter a smattering“.

Furthermore, there are a lot of Esperanto speakers who have studied linguistics or related subjects and who published about Esperanto. Many publications can be found for example on the pages of the German „Gesellschaft für Interlinguistik“ (Society for Interlinguistics, interlinguistik-gil.de) as well as in the bibliography of the Modern Language Association (MLA). Some literature on Esperanto has been published in Hungary and Poland—after all, as mentioned, Esperantology could be studied at the University of Budapest for more than 30 years since 1966, and the subject "Interlinguistics" with the focus on Esperanto is offered for 20 years at the University of Poznań (at the University of Amsterdam there is the above-mentioned Chair of Interlinguistics and Esperanto since 1997).

4 Untrue Statements by linguists about Esperanto

4.1 Overview

The following untrue statements on Esperanto cover a wide range. On the one hand there is the fundamentally false assumption that Esperanto would practically not exist, there would be no authors and therefore no works in Esperanto. There would also be no Esperanto language community (at least no Esperanto native speakers) or it would be not possible to speak Esperanto.

We may see some incorrect suppositions about Esperanto's characteristics as somewhat attenuated false assumptions - for example the wrong ideas that there would be no living culture or no puns. We may also include here the notions that Esperanto would be "rigidly regulated", that there would be no language change or no independent development. It is also sometimes mistakenly assumed that Esperanto would be just as difficult to learn for speakers of non-Indo-Germanic languages as other European languages.

A false conclusion is the idea that Esperanto would be no language, not a living language or not a "real" language. This would in fact follow if Esperanto had no language community and no core of the language community that uses the language daily, sometimes even as the most used language, no community of native speakers with the associated Esperanto-speaking parents, no literature of ten thousand books and about a hundred new publications annually, no musical culture with some thousand songs, etc. However, all this exists and those who know it usually see Esperanto as a living language, as did the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2004.

4.2 Does Esperanto have no authors or works?

In 2017 an interview with a French philologist, philosopher and now member of the *Académie française* was published on the Internet in an English translation (Cassin 2017); the original interview was published in French in 2012. In her answer to the question, "I'm wondering how you explain the failure of Esperanto?", she said among other false assertions: "Because Esperanto is an absolutely artificial language that has neither authors nor works."

It is undisputed that Esperanto does have authors who also write works in Esperanto and publish them; Geoffrey Sutton (2008) has presented about 300 original Esperanto authors and their main works.

4.3 Is the (great) literature completely missing? Is there no living culture?

During a conversation on the subject of "German as a scientific language" for the German Goethe-Institut in 2011, a linguist was asked: Wouldn't it be better anyway, for reasons of communicative justice, to introduce an artificial language like Esperanto into everyday life? Answer: I don't think much of it. From my point of view, Latin would be even better, at least for Europe. Behind Latin there is a great literature, which is completely missing in Esperanto. But perhaps it is better to participate in a living culture like the English and American culture rather than in an artificial or a dead language (Trabant 2011).²⁶

At that time, the linguist seemed to assume, as does the French philologist mentioned above at least in 2012, that literature is completely lacking in Esperanto. It may also be possible to interpret the sentence as meaning that Esperanto lacks great literature; however, no scientific studies are known

26 Original, question: „Wäre es da aus Gründen kommunikativer Gerechtigkeit nicht ohnehin besser, für den Alltag eine Kunstsprache wie Esperanto einzuführen?“ Answer: „Davon halte ich gar nichts. Da wäre aus meiner Sicht, zumindest für Europa, Latein noch besser. Hinter dem Lateinischen steht ja eine große Literatur, die bei Esperanto völlig fehlt. Aber vielleicht ist es doch besser, statt an einer künstlichen oder einer toten Sprache an einer lebendigen Kultur wie der englischen und amerikanischen zu partizipieren.“

to argue in this way. The membership of the Esperanto PEN Centre in the writers' association PEN International was pointed out before.

The third sentence of the answer implicitly denies the existence of a living culture in Esperanto--in view of the books and songs that appear regularly in Esperanto, one has to ask on what such a view is based.

4.4 Are there few or no native speakers?

The fact that there are people with Esperanto as their mother tongue has been shown by many studies.²⁷ Their number, as mentioned, is now estimated at about one thousand to two thousand. However, this fact does not seem to be very well known in linguistics.

In her work on the role of the Esperanto native speaker, Sabine Fiedler (2010: 166) quotes some authors who assume that Esperanto has only a few native speakers (Wu 2005: 143), that it is not the mother tongue of a significant group (Van Parijs 2004: 121) or that Esperanto has no native speakers (Nezhad/Aliakbari 2001). These authors mostly also assume that Esperanto for this reason suffered from a lack of assertiveness and acceptance, or that therefore it would be in a difficult position.

Similarly, in a book on the myth and reality of the native speaker, the introduction already contains the statement that a language without native speakers (or without „sufficient native speakers“), for example an artificial language such as Esperanto, would be "non-viable" (Davies 2003: 1):

A language without native speakers, whether a dying language (for example Australian aboriginal languages, Celtic languages), the language of an isolated group (for example immigrant communities several generations old) or an artificial language (for example Esperanto), such languages we say are non-viable precisely because they lack sufficient native speakers.

In response to the question posed on the Internet site "Ask a linguist" about "negativities in Esperanto", a linguist wrote in 2001, among other things, that there were no Esperanto native speakers (or that one may perhaps find three; Foster 2001). Another linguist also complains in his answer that Esperanto „has few, if any, native speakers“. Esperanto and similar languages would „illustrate the fallacy of assuming that a language is something that one, anyone, can consciously design.“ (Mills 2001).

In the interview mentioned above, after the untrue statement that there were no Esperanto authors, the philologist finally made the assumption that Esperanto would be nobody's mother tongue: "As dead as a dead language, Esperanto is no one's maternal language." She also expressed her view that Esperanto would be "a pure artefact and not a language". (Cassin 2017) Not even one of these assumptions is true.

27 Cf. e. g. Fiedler (2010), Corsetti (1996), Lindstedt (2006), Bergen (2001), Versteegh (1993), some of which have already been mentioned.

One can certainly discuss whether the existence of native speakers is in fact essential to establish that a means of communication such as Esperanto is a "language" (or a "real" language) – but we have to see that a whole range of linguists supposes exactly this idea.²⁸

Fortunately, the existence of Esperanto native speakers (as well as their contact with each other and the daily use of the language by their parents) saves the effort of further discussion. In addition, it should perhaps be noted that there is now a small core language community for which Esperanto has become the most used language (these people are mostly non-native speakers of Esperanto).

4.5 Excursus: Importance of Esperanto native speakers and families

Esperanto has developed over many decades with only small participation of native speakers, who even today still have a quite limited numerical share of the total number of Esperanto speakers. They are not, as with ethnic languages, the reference persons for the correctness of the language;²⁹ this is decided by the community of competent speakers on the basis of the rules accepted in 1905 (and taking into account the written and oral usage of language).

Nevertheless, the emergence of a community of Esperanto native speakers indicates a significant development and stabilization of the Esperanto language community. Esperanto native speakers have over almost two decades practically daily contact with at least one reference person who speaks Esperanto to them and with them (quite often the father, sometimes also the mother, a grandparent or the like); children learn a lot of Esperanto even if the parents usually speak Esperanto to each other (for example, if they have different mother tongues; even without speaking Esperanto to the child) and if the children take part in Esperanto events with the parents, especially those with other children. It should also taken into account that a person only dares to teach his or her child a language other than the own if he or she speaks this language at a fairly high level; so the emergence of the community of native speakers is a certain indication of the language level of the parent generation.

The existence of the Esperanto native speakers indicates that there are probably at least half as many competent Esperanto speakers who have spoken or still speak Esperanto daily, at least during the childhood and adolescence of their children;³⁰ the daily speaking of Esperanto or at least the frequent use via the Internet probably in many cases does not end with the coming of age of the children; this is especially quite often the case when these native speakers have often gone to Esperanto events as children and adolescents, whereby acquaintances and friendships develop with peers from other countries. The group of parents, who have a lot of contact also with Esperanto-speaking couples without children, together with those who use Esperanto daily at work in Esperanto organizations (or volunteer for them) or in their spare time, constitute a core of the

28 Cf. also Fiedler (2010: 163), who reports of statements like "Yes, if there are mother tongue speakers of Esperanto, then it must actually be a real language".

29 Cf. e. g. Fiedler (2010: 171) on the role of the Esperanto native speaker and the other Esperanto speakers.

30 Half as many parents, if it is assumed that the families have on average two children and that the other parent communicates in a different language.

Esperanto language community; in addition, there are those who edit magazines or write books, articles or song lyrics (there is some overlap).

If, on the other hand, many linguists assume that there are no Esperanto native speakers, it is quite conceivable that, beyond this untrue assumption, they also have little or no knowledge of the community of adult Esperanto speakers who use Esperanto practically every day or for whom Esperanto has even become their main language, the language they use most throughout the year.³¹ This means that the Esperanto language practice as a whole may be seen in the wrong light and thus the question of whether Esperanto is a developed and fully valid language also has an insufficient basis.

Occasionally it is written about Esperanto that it has no native speakers and that this would be even advantageous because nobody had an advantage as a native speaker, as this is currently the case with English.³² Although the Esperanto native speakers form a rather small group, their existence should not be overlooked or concealed. When comparing the situation of the native speakers of English and Esperanto, it should also be borne in mind that in many cases English native speakers speak only this language on a usable level, which is for them mother tongue, national language and international language at the same time. In contrast, Esperanto native speakers speak at least two languages, but often three or more: An Esperanto native speaker who grows up in Germany, for example, learns German at the beginning of school at the latest and then at school he or she usually learns English.³³ Even if the acquisition of another language as a native language may seem easy for the outsider - this learning also requires time and effort; in addition, the acquisition of the other native language is somewhat slowed down. Furthermore, even in adulthood it takes some effort to keep more than one language active; this is an effort similar to the effort those have to make who learned their second and other languages as teens or later.³⁴

In some places we find the idea, that Esperanto as a mother tongue does not correspond to the goal of a planned language.³⁵ On the one hand, it should be considered here that according to the

31 Contacts with some linguists which do not speak Esperanto (but wrote or talked about it) indicate that the daily use of Esperanto is partly unknown. A Facebook survey on the question during which part of the year Esperanto is used was referred to above.

32 Klare (2010: 29) reports from André Martinet that he has seen an advantage in Esperanto that virtually nobody speaks this language as a mother tongue, all communication partners have to learn it first and nobody has the advantage to have it as a mother tongue.

33 Nikola Rašić (1994) has compiled a few studies according to which the Esperanto speakers interviewed speak on average slightly more than three foreign languages, i.e. a total of four languages - their national language, Esperanto, often English as well as another language.

34 Perhaps when comparing the position of native speakers it should be taken into account that an Esperanto learner (European mother tongue), thanks to the quick learnability of Esperanto, has a good chance of coming quite close to the language level of an Esperanto native speaker in five learning years of e.g. 500 hours, i.e. a sum of 2500 hours. (This sum of annual Esperanto hours is attainable with e.g. one hour on each weekday and 5 hours on weekends; Esperanto events are added to this). The level reached then should correspond to the language level after far more hours of English; assuming a ratio of between 1:2 and 1:4 for the acquisition of a higher language level, it would mean about 5,000 to 10,000 hours of English. Conversely, the Esperanto mother tongue speaker had at least one other mother tongue and therefore there was significantly less time available for Esperanto than a monolingual has for his or her mother tongue.

35 Klare (2012) quotes Blanke as saying that it is 'not the task of a planned language' to function as a mother tongue. Fiedler (2010: 163) also expresses, among other arguments, pro and contra Esperanto as a mother tongue the idea, that the existence of native speakers contradicts the essence of a planned language, which above all should enable equal communication through the fact that everyone has to learn it.

Declaration on the Nature of Esperantism (Boulogne-sur-Mer, 1905), anyone who wishes to do so can use the language for any purpose.³⁶ On the other hand, Zamenhof wrote in his letter to Abram Kofman, May 28, 1901, that an international language will only become stronger in the long run, if there is a group of people who accept it as their family language and inherited language. One hundred such people would be far more important for the idea of a neutral language than millions of other people. The inherited language of the smallest and least important people would have a much more guaranteed and indelible life than a language without a people, even if millions of people would use it.³⁷

4.6 A real language?

The idea, that Esperanto would not be a language or not a "real" language, can be found in many places. Quite impressively, in 2001, an English linguist explained why Esperanto would not be a living language according to his understanding, in response to a general question about Esperanto in the Internet list "Ask a linguist" mentioned above (Trask, 2001; the question presented the simplicity of Esperanto and asked about the disadvantages):

"(...) the big drawback of Esperanto is its lack of a community of native speakers, or indeed its lack of a community of speakers at all. Consequently, it isn't really a living language, and it accordingly lacks the richness and vibrancy of a living language, the variety and the elaboration of function."

The chain of conclusions in the answer is logical in itself - however, the statements about the reality underlying the conclusions are not true. There are quite sure not only individual native speakers, but rather about one or two thousand people, and there is also a community of native speakers who see each other at Esperanto events, special family gatherings and private visits. There is, as described, also an Esperanto language community as a whole with a small core language community that predominantly uses Esperanto. Esperanto is indeed a living language and this language has a great linguistic wealth and the vivacity of a language that is constantly being used and developed.

The statement that Esperanto is a living language can also be found in a statement of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Nyelvtudományi Intézet, 2004). The Academy wrote that it is the unanimous opinion of leading experts of the Institute of Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that Esperanto belongs to the category of living languages. On closer examination, taking into account the history as well as the current state of the language Esperanto, it emerges that Esperanto a) is largely standardised, b) is largely embedded in society, c) is a non-ethnic living language that fulfils all conceivable linguistic functions within a second language community and at the same time functions as a bridge language.³⁸

36 "Ĉiu deziranto povas" (...) "uzadi la lingvon por ĉiaj eblaj celoj". Deklaracio pri la esenco de Esperantismo, https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deklaracio_pri_Esperanto. The motivation of the parents, who speak Esperanto with their children, is in many cases, above all, to prepare the children for the common participation in the Esperanto life of the parents (attendance of Esperanto meetings, journeys, private contact to other Esperanto speakers).

37 »Lingvo Internacia fortikiĝos por ĉiam nur en tia okazo, se ekzistos ia grupo da homoj, kiuj akceptus ĝin kiel sian lingvon familian, heredan. Cento da tiaj homoj estas por la ideo de lingvo neŭtrala multege pli grava ol milionoj da aliaj homoj. Hereda lingvo de la plej malgranda kaj plej sensignifa popolo havas vivon multege pli garantiitan kaj neestingeban, ol senpopola lingvo, kiun uzus eĉ milionoj da homoj.«

38 Translation into German by a Hungarian.

In an anthology on the status change of languages edited by Ulrich Ammon and Marlis Hellinger, Alicja Sakaguchi (1991) has published an article entitled "Der Weg von einem Sprachprojekt zu einer lebenden Welthilfssprache. Einige Aspekte des Statuswandels dargestellt am Beispiel des Esperanto" (The way from a language project to a living international auxiliary language. Some Aspects of Status Change, illustrated by the Example of Esperanto).

Already in 1985 in his work "Internationale Plansprachen" Detlev Blanke presented the development of Esperanto from a project to a language with a gradual increase in areas of use.

Similar to the linguist cited above, there are reports from some linguistic institutes that Esperanto is not regarded as a language or as a "real" language by most teachers. In 2017, for example, a young linguist from France reported in a youtube film that in the linguistics course she had been told that Esperanto was not a language because it was not a natural language.³⁹ In the video she then came to the conclusion that Esperanto was indeed a language because there were native speakers.

Similarly, an American linguistics student, commenting on an article on the Internet, said in 2017 that in the US, linguists consider Esperanto in a reflex to be a somewhat ridiculous affair; they would have the opinion that Esperanto would not be a "real language".⁴⁰

A former linguistics student from Germany reports that during her studies in the late 1980s at a German university, Esperanto was regarded by most professors to be not "a real language".⁴¹

Until 2015, a transcript from 1999 to a lecture "Introduction to Linguistics" at a German university was to be found on the Internet, where it could be read in German (the translation follows):⁴²

Language

= natural languages (homo loquens)

- artificial languages (Esperanto)

!= formal languages (mathematics, logic)

!= Programming languages (Prolog, Ada)

!= Languages of the animals

Then followed the sentences: Artificial languages are examined only marginally. They could not prevail because language lives.⁴³

So "artificial languages" like Esperanto seem to be nothing for the "homo loquens". Furthermore, at least the listener understood that artificial languages could not prevail, since "language lives", which does not seem to apply to Esperanto according to the professor's opinion.

39 »En cours de linguistique on m'a déjà dit que l'espéranto n'était pas une langue parce que ce n'est pas une langue naturelle«. Elles Comme Linguistes (2017) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf1EcI5R4xI&t=3m33s> .

40 Komentanto (2017) in a commentary under an article by Renato Corsetti in Libera Folio. "Mi estas studento pri lingvistiko en Usono kaj povas diri, ke ĉi tie lingvistoj refleksi taksas esperanton iom ridinda afero, kaj opinias ke ĝi ne estas 'vera lingvo.'"

41 Personal communication to the author.

42 A copy of the pages is stored by the author of this text.

43 »Künstliche Sprachen werden nur am Rande untersucht. Sie konnten sich nicht durchsetzen, da Sprache lebt.«

4.6.1 A real language for native speakers?

A linguist quoted above expressed the opinion that Esperanto would not really be a living language because it lacked a community of native speakers and a language community. When asked whether Esperanto was a natural language because there were native speakers, the same linguist answered three years later (Trask, 2004): "If it is true that there exist people who have Esperanto as their genuine mother tongue, and not just as an auxiliary to another language, then, yes, the Esperanto spoken by these unfortunates must be counted as a natural language -- but not the Esperanto spoken by other people." (Read 'people'.) He continues, that he will not try to conceal his contempt for the „basket cases“ who teach „their unfortunate children“ Esperanto as their first language. „Why not Klingon?“ It is not known that in a serious investigation of Esperanto native speakers the idea would arise that these children are to be regretted. They usually enjoy international holidays with children from other countries and later on they are often very happy about their parents' decision, which - as is well known - makes learning of other foreign languages and travelling much easier. When asked why not Klingon, there is a simple answer: there are no Klingon native speakers with whom the children could speak.

Even a quite well-known linguist, Noam Chomsky, had repeatedly expressed himself in the sense that Esperanto was not a language.⁴⁴ Presumably this was due to the fact that he was insufficiently informed about today's language use in the international Esperanto language community. After being informed about the Esperanto native speakers, he then wrote in an email to the author, "Esperanto is a language for native speakers."^{45 46}

After a lecture by a linguist, a discussion on Esperanto took place in Berlin on 10 February 2015. After some time of exchanging information and views on Esperanto, the lecturer expressed the opinion that Esperanto should be regarded as a language, since obviously there are also Esperanto native speakers (this was communicated during the discussion).⁴⁷

Fiedler (2010: 163) also reports that in discussions on planned languages and Esperanto with persons outside the Esperanto language community, the existence of Esperanto native speakers often proves to be an argument for the full value of the language.

4.7 Is it not possible to speak Esperanto?

The well-known Esperanto speaker Renato Corsetti reports from the nineties of a telephone call that he had in Esperanto with another Esperanto speaker, Mauro La Torre. La Torre worked at the University of Rome and shared his study with another linguist. At the end of the telephone

44 For example in a conversation published in 2017 (Chomsky 2017a). More references on https://eo.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noam_Chomsky#Chomsky_pri_Esperanto .

45 The whole sentence reads: »Esperanto is a language for native speakers, but it is not what is described by the ›grammars of Esperanto.« Chomsky (2017b). See also Wunsch-Rolshoven (2018).

46 Quite interesting for Chomsky's understanding of Esperanto at that time is also Chomsky (2015: 19m31s-22m05s), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZVxcoS1etE&t=19m41s>. Here he presents his idea about the creation of Esperanto (e.g.: »when people say they're inventing a language, what they're doing is actually filling out some of the superficial details of their actual linguistic knowledge«).

47 The author of this text was present at the discussion. Title of Jürgen Trabant's lecture at the "Salon der Sprachen" (Salon of Languages): »Globalesisch oder was? Ein Plädoyer für Europas Sprachen«. (Globalese or what? A plea for European languages. „Globalesisch“, Globalese, is a fun name the author gave to International English.)

conversation, this linguist asked what language La Torre spoke. La Torre: Esperanto. Reaction of the linguist: That's impossible, Esperanto cannot be spoken.⁴⁸

It is astonishing that a linguist apparently supposed that Esperanto can not be spoken; the background is unclear.

4.8 Is Esperanto rigidly regulated?

In 2008, a linguist was asked about Esperanto in an interview with an Austrian newspaper after predicting "a global language derived from English" for the future: Wouldn't Esperanto be an alternative? Answer: Esperanto would not be bad, it is politically neutral, like Latin, and simpler than this. But as an artificial, rigidly regulated language, it is also a 'non-language' that cannot prevail.⁴⁹

It is to be welcomed that the interviewee is aware of the political neutrality of Esperanto and its simplicity. On the other hand it is not easy to understand the idea that Esperanto should be regarded as "rigidly regulated" and that the language thus differs from other languages; in any language grammatical forms are not arbitrary, but fixed.

What the linguist possibly meant by speaking of a "rigidly regulated" language is the fact that in Esperanto certain grammatical forms are fixed in the long run. Esperanto is regular and there are no exceptions. The simple past form of verbs (these end in the present in -as) is always -is. In German, on the other hand, as well as in other ethnic languages, such grammatical forms may change over the decades; so the forms *ich frug* and *ich buk* in the recent past have given way to the regular forms *ich fragte* and *ich backte*. [Should there be an English example? ###] Also in Esperanto there is change, in other parts of the language - there are not only new words as well as old words whose use and meaning change; also grammatical change occurs (see below "Change of language").

The essence of a language and of a living language, however, does not depend on such questions of historical change. Those linguists who have studied Esperanto in depth agree that Esperanto is to be regarded as a living language.⁵⁰ Esperanto is a language with indeed a special history and also a rather unusual use, especially in a diaspora, but quite sure a living language.

4.9 Are there no wordplays in Esperanto?

There are wordplays in Esperanto with a flourishing already in the 1920s (especially Raymond Schwartz) and the wordplays by Schwartz have been investigated by Lloancy (1985), as was pointed out in the introduction. A professor at the EHESS (a French elite higher-education establishment for social sciences), a philologist and philosopher, however, was not aware of wordplays in Esperanto at least in 2016. In an interview with EuroCité, a self-described progressive

48 Personal communication of Renato Corsetti.

49 „Esperanto wäre nicht schlecht, es ist politisch neutral, wie Latein, und einfacher als dieses. Aber als künstliche, starr regulierte Sprache ist es eben auch eine »Nichtsprache«, die sich nicht durchsetzen kann.“ (Trabant 2008).

50 See for instance the mentioned passages Sakaguchi (1991) and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Nyelvtudományi Intézet, 2004)

European Think Tank, he said it would be impossible to form wordplays in Esperanto.⁵¹ This is untrue, as described.

The underlying assumption that the development of Esperanto has not yet progressed very far also comes to light in a sentence of a German journalist that is remarkable because of its lack of reality. In his article "Nachruf aufs Esperanto" (Obituary to Esperanto), first published in 1994 in *NZZ Folio*, the monthly magazine of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, one can read that artificial languages would offer no children's songs and no verses, no curses, no jokes, no idioms.⁵² Here five statements are lined up, all of which are wrong for Esperanto, since many a decade. There are indeed children's songs for children speaking Esperanto; poems were published already in the very first Esperanto book in 1887. Curses, jokes and idioms are so essential to human life that they soon formed in the Esperanto language community.

4.10 Can Esperanto not develop with a certain autonomy?

In Kimura/Fiedler (2013: 101 - 102) Sabine Fiedler discusses especially the pages dealing with Esperanto of a book on multilingualism in the European Union („Mehrsprachigkeit in der Europäischen Union“);⁵³ some lines on Esperanto are reproduced in the discussion. The author of the book holds a master's degree in French, Italian and international law from the University of Zurich and was until recently Deputy German Ambassador in Ljubljana; the text is his doctoral thesis at the University of Duisburg-Essen.⁵⁴

As ‚linguistic objections‘ to Esperanto in the EU, the author first cites the ‚central argument‘ that Esperanto is ‚an artificial language‘ which ‚unlike the EU languages, does not have autochthonous roots in a defined cultural origin‘ and ‚cannot develop like natural languages with a certain autonomy‘. Why it should be an argument against the use of Esperanto in the EU that this international language is an ‚artificial language‘ (in specialist literature for so many decades usually called "planned language"), which ‚has no autochthonous roots in a defined cultural origin‘, remains unclear - the author does not explain it. That Esperanto, on the other hand, is rooted in its worldwide linguistic and cultural community is obvious for experts and proven by many works. The assumption that Esperanto cannot ‚develop with a certain autonomy‘ is not true; Esperanto does indeed develop in the Esperanto language community (cf. texts about the language change in Esperanto, e. g. Benoît Philippe, 1991).

This introduction is followed by seven questions, the first of which is: Who would be the instance that could define, codify or contain neologisms, loans and parallelisms? As an Esperanto speaker

51 Wismann (2016): »Toutes les grandes langues de culture combinent le connotatif et le dénotatif. Les langues artificielles comme l'Espéranto et le globish restent dans le dénotatif. Un exemple très simple le prouve : il est impossible de faire des jeux de mots en Espéranto.« (All the major languages of culture combine the connotative and the denotative. Artificial languages such as Esperanto and globish remain in the denotative. A very simple example proves it: it is impossible to make puns in Esperanto.) The origin of this untrue assumption may be the general misconception that Esperanto does not go beyond a factual description of the world.

52 Schneider (1994); reprint with NZZ Libro, also with Rowohlt in the anthology "Gewönne doch der Konjunktiv! Sprachwitz in 66 Lektionen“, Schneider (2009: 106-109).

53 The table of contents and a brief assessment can be found in Detlev Blanke (2013: 24-26).

54 Haselhuber (2012: 383 – 384). https://www.fdv.uni-lj.si/docs/default-source/napovednik/cv_dr-jakob-haselhuber.pdf?sfvrsn=0 (accessed 2019-05-01)

one is tempted to refer to the fact that since 1905 there has been a "Fundamento of Esperanto" which lays down basic rules and to which the Esperanto speakers adhere in their overwhelming majority; in addition there is the "Akademio de Esperanto" which observes the development of the language and makes recommendations on the use of the language. However, there are no answers to the seven questions, which are probably meant rhetorically, although answers could easily be found by contact with Esperanto experts or by reading the esperantological literature (Fiedler quotes the questions in Kimura/Fiedler, 2013: 102, and refers to a few works on the different subjects). Instead, the author summarizes by claiming that Esperanto would neither have its own roots nor would it have its own or independent development, nor would it have a generally accepted authority as a referential instance. These statements are not justified with sources and they are not comprehensible.

Sabine Fiedler notes that the missing mention of specialist literature on the subject of planned languages is conspicuous - the reader would certainly appreciate, if the author had at least tried to prove his statements and allusions.

As Sabine Fiedler writes, the argument mentioned by the author is undisputed, that Esperanto should currently hardly find acceptance in Europe. However, one has to ask, on the basis of what kind of information Esperanto is judged and what the judging persons actually know or think to know about Esperanto. Whoever has the same ideas about Esperanto as the author of this dissertation and many other persons mentioned in this article, has indeed good reasons not to accept Esperanto. As long as the untrue assumptions about the reality of Esperanto and its linguistic community remain, an increasing acceptance is probably not to be expected. One could also say in the sense presented below of a distinction between "Esperanto A" (the language actually spoken in its worldwide linguistic community) and "Esperanto B" (the untrue ideas of Esperanto) that the Esperanto speakers and a small number of other persons familiar with the present state of Esperanto propose Esperanto A, while a majority of persons reject Esperanto B: This is a failed communication. A meaningful exchange on the subject can only begin when this problem is ended by the acquisition of knowledge (but those who firmly believe in the existence of Esperanto B and the associated untrue assumptions do see no gap in their knowledge and thus they see no reason to inform themselves thoroughly).

4.11 No main lecture in Esperanto?

At the invitation of the organizers, a professor of applied linguistics and former head of a university training institution for interpreting and translation visited the Esperanto World Congress 1999 in Berlin as well as the 2nd "Nitobe Symposium", which was organized during the congress and scientifically dealt with Esperanto. In a conversation with a newspaper he later said that he had been invited to the congress ,although it is known that I belong to the group of anti-Esperantists'. According to a newspaper article, after the event he saw ,only more confirmation of his scepticism towards the well-meant concern of the Esperanto disciples'.⁵⁵

55 Interview by Silvia Buss (1999) with Wolfram Wilss for the German newspaper *Saarbrücker Zeitung*. Original: Er sei eingeladen worden, »obwohl bekannt ist, dass ich zur Gruppe der Anti-Esperantisten gehöre«. (...) Er sah sich »in seiner Skepsis gegenüber dem gutgemeinten Anliegen der Esperanto-Jünger nur noch mehr

The article continues that the linguist had noticed, that even at the Berlin Congress, ‚not one of the main lectures was held in Esperanto, but either in German or English‘. This seems to be based on a confusion – as usual, also at the 84th Esperanto World Congress in Berlin, all lectures were held in Esperanto (possibly with the exception of a few information events for the general public); on the other hand, the main lectures at the symposium were probably held in German or English in order to enable the present scientists who did not speak Esperanto to understand the lectures. (The interviewee also stated that he personally had had ‚the greatest difficulty in understanding lectures in Esperanto‘.⁵⁶)

4.12 Language change in Esperanto

It is true that a number of grammatical structures in Esperanto are defined by the so-called Fundamento of 1905 - but this does not mean that the entire language is unchangeable. It is easy to understand that Esperanto forms or takes up new words to express new notions, such as *saĝtelefono* (smart phone) for *smartphone*. A well-known example of grammatical change is the formation of a verb from an adjective, merely by adding the verb ending, in a sentence like *la domo blankas* instead of *la domo estas blanka* (both for *the house is white*); the first form was not yet used in the early years of Esperanto. Language change is also the subject of scientific research; Benoît Philippe (1991) has, as mentioned, investigated ‚the language change in a planned language using the example of Esperanto‘ in his doctoral thesis.

Nevertheless, it is sometimes mistakenly assumed that Esperanto lacks any linguistic change. In an article on theconversation.com, a site for articles from the academic and research community, Tolkien's languages are compared with Esperanto (Seargeant 2017). (However, there is no mention in this context that J. R. R. Tolkien learned Esperanto at the age of 15. According to his own statement, in 1932, he ‚at one time read a fair amount written“ in Esperanto;⁵⁷ he wrote a short text in Esperanto when he was 17, in 1909, "The Book of the Foxrook".⁵⁸) About the alleged lack of language change in Esperanto it can be read on theconversation.com:

Paradoxically, Tolkien's concept is closer to how languages actually work in the real world. His Elvish languages as they are depicted throughout his work are living, changing things, which evolve to reflect the culture of the communities who speak them.

The idea of an international auxiliary language, on the other hand, is to provide a stable base, which can be easily learnt by anyone. But human languages are never static; they're always dynamic. So Esperanto has a fundamental flaw built into its very conception.

bestätigt.«

56 Original: Er persönlich hätte »größte Schwierigkeiten gehabt, Vorträge in Esperanto zu verstehen«.

57 „I know it, as a philologist would say, in that 25 years ago I learned and have not forgotten its grammar and structure, and at one time read a fair amount written in it (...)"

58 The manuscript begins with the title "Privata kodo skauĵa", private scout code. - Sometimes it is claimed that Tolkien had turned against Esperanto in a "letter" in 1956 - in fact the found text is only a draft of a letter of which it is not clear whether it was ever sent. The sentence on Esperanto also shows that Tolkien has not yet thought it over - he writes of "Esperanto legends" that the authors of Esperanto, Volapük, Ido or Novial should have invented... Why should the authors of e.g. Ido or Novial have invented "Esperanto legends"?

It is true that Esperanto has a stable foundation. But what lies outside this basis may change over the years and decades, and it actually changes, as shown above by an example; in this respect, Esperanto lives as dynamically as other languages and the flaw mentioned in the text is not existent.

4.13 Is Esperanto as difficult for non-Europeans as to learn other European languages?

In "Ask a linguist" an English linguist notes about Esperanto "its lack of irregularities and grammatical gender", but then claims without evidence that Esperanto is "not necessarily any easier than any other European language for a speaker of a non-European language" Trask (2001). However there are plenty of statements by Asians that show that Esperanto can be learned in about a quarter of the time needed for other European languages.⁵⁹ This results, among other things, from the absence of irregularities mentioned in the answer, but also from the small number of grammatical rules and the great possibilities of word formation using prefixes and suffixes, which lead to a considerable reduction of the word stems to be learned.

4.14 Esperanto speakers or Esperanto proponents?

In a study on native Esperanto speakers, an American linguist writes in the introduction that Esperanto is spoken by its proponents: „The artificial language Esperanto is spoken not only as a second language, by its proponents, but also as a native language by children of some of those proponents.“ (Bergen, 2001)

The author seems to assume that all speakers of Esperanto are thus already "proponents" of the language, presumably in the sense that they advocate a general introduction as an international language. It would be more obvious to designate persons who speak Esperanto as „Esperanto speakers“, just as with other languages (e.g. one does not speak of "English proponents", if one wants to designate the second language speakers of English). Indeed, there is probably a certain proportion of Esperanto speakers who have simply learned Esperanto and speak it without worrying about dissemination and the like.

59 See, for example, the statement quoted by Gotelind Müller and Gregor Benton (2007: 99): »Anyone familiar with western languages would know that English takes at least five years to learn and French at least seven. Esperanto, on the other hand, could be learned in a year.« The section on Esperanto in Gregor Benton's book is, according to the introduction, strongly based on Müller (2001). - Also e. g. ZHU Xin, in „Komenco de Mia Esperanto-Vojo“ (2000) reports: „Now, when I read a sentimental novel in Esperanto, I weep as it touches my heart. I really enjoy that. I never felt that much joy when I read English books, even though I've studied English for 7-8 years and Esperanto for only 4-5 months.“ Original on <https://nigra-okulo.livejournal.com/4047.html> , translation on <https://blogs.transparent.com/esperanto/chinese-learns-esperanto-in-just-5-months/>
See also Pirlot (2009) who collected statements of Asians about Esperanto (translated from Esperanto), e.g. Han Zuwu (China): Obviously I learn Esperanto much easier than English. („Kompreneble mi lernas Esperanton pli multe facile ol la angla lingvo.“)
Tahira Masako (Japan), after presenting some difficulties: In spite of this Esperanto is a lot easier than English for Asians. („Malgraŭ ĉio Esperanto estas multe pli facila ol la angla lingvo por azianoj.“)
Liu Baoguo (China): (...) in Esperanto there are very few Asian terms. However, compared to English, Esperanto is much easier to study. Many Chinese people have studied English for more than ten years and they are unable to use it well. (... en Esperanto troviĝas ege malmultaj aziaj terminoj. Tamen, kompare kun la angla lingvo, Esperanto estas multe pli facile lernebla. Multaj ĉinoj lernis la anglan pli ol dek jarojn kaj ne povas bone uzi ĝin.)

5 Untrue Assumptions made by scientists in other disciplines

The statements of linguists about Esperanto are very often assumed to be true. They spread in different ways - e.g. in courses for students, in exchanges of ideas with younger scientists, via scientists of other subjects, through scientific and popular scientific articles, through books, through research talks with journalists or interviews as well as through information to politicians (who then pass this on in response to a parliamentary question or in interviews).

The students who were given untrue assumptions about Esperanto at the university later become partly teachers, who then occasionally pass the false statements on to their students, and partly journalists, who sometimes give their readers or listeners a view that is far from reality.

Below are a few examples of untrue and unfounded statements by scientists from other disciplines.

5.1 How much sectarianism? Is Esperanto not a viable medium?

In his book on the history of the 19th century, a German professor of modern and contemporary history also mentions Esperanto in about ten lines. He speaks about more than 1500 Esperanto-speaking groups already in 1912, only a few outside Europe and North America. At least in the first imprints of the German original of his book he goes on to say that these linguistic ‚globalists‘ have not found their way out of sectarianism and that Esperanto has not become ‚a viable medium‘⁶⁰.

These lines are followed by an endnote referring to Peter G. Forster's book "The Esperanto Movement" (1982), p. 22 (Tab. 3); on this page there is a statistic on Esperanto groups, but there are no statements on "sectarianism" or on the question whether Esperanto is "viable". For the current state of the language and its use beyond the Esperanto language community, see above Chapter 2 on the dissemination and use of Esperanto; this shows the obvious viability and the life of Esperanto.

Perhaps it is true to describe some Esperanto speakers as ‚language globalists‘; however, this term could probably also be applied to those who plead for English as a global language.

It can be noted with joy that the English translation of the book (Osterhammel, 2014: 511) informs about Esperanto in a correct way: „This most effective kind of premeditated linguistic globalism created a truly planetary community of communication, but it never dislodged any of the national languages and did not gain widespread acceptance as a medium of scholarly exchange.“

5.2 Has Esperanto been eradicated?

In a work on the history of the world in the years 1870-1945 the movement for Esperanto in the twenties and thirties is briefly mentioned. The German translation of the original English work truly

60 »(...) 1912 gab es mehr als 1500 Esperanto sprechende Gruppen, nur wenige außerhalb Europas und Nordamerikas. Aus dem Sektierertum haben diese Sprachglobalisten nicht hinausgefunden; ein lebensfähiges Medium ist aus dem Esperanto nicht geworden.« Osterhammel (2010: 732)

reports that Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin denigrated the language by associating it with the Jews and with corrosive forces; it concludes by saying that they succeeded in eradicating it.⁶¹

The statement in the German translation that Hitler and Stalin succeeded in "eradicating" Esperanto is untrue. (The English original says correctly: "They worked to stamp it out." Rosenberg 2012: 851) Even if in both countries the passing on of Esperanto to younger generations was naturally very difficult (and even if in the early years after the Second World War Esperanto associations were forbidden in many countries of the Warsaw Pact, at least until Stalin's death in 1953), many Esperanto speakers survived and passed Esperanto on in secret.

After the times of war and oppression, the Esperanto language community has rebuilt itself, in these and many other countries.

5.3 Would English be more efficient?

In his book „Linguistic Justice for Europe and the World“, a Belgian philosopher and economist has argued that English as a world language contributes to more justice; this thesis will not be examined here.

In an appendix to his first chapter, the author discusses "Three Alternatives to lingua franca convergence - machine translation ("Babel Fish", based on the translation tool from Douglas Adams' novel "Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"), Esperanto and "Lingua franca pluralism" (i.e. several such languages). Esperanto as a possible alternative to English is dealt with in two sections on "Neutrality" (Van Parijs 2011: 40–42) and "Simplicity" (pp. 42–46). The author states (p. 42): "Esperanto does have some fairness advantage over English based on its greater 'neutrality' (...)." Somewhat later follows the assertion that the argument for English does not consist in the fact that the choice of English would be more neutral or more fair, but in the fact that "going for it would be far more efficient": "Since some variety of English is already the mother tongue of a few hundreds of millions of human beings and a second language for several hundreds of millions more, choosing English rather than an artificial language to be learned by everyone would seem to save a considerable amount of laborious learning effort and scarce resources." It is somewhat surprising to find a statement on efficiency in a book on linguistic justice that argues for English, while it has already been admitted about Esperanto that it is superior to English in terms of fairness or justice. It seems the author wants to use the idea of linguistic justice only, if it is advantageous for his main purpose, to promote English; if this is not possible, he neglects linguistic justice and takes another argument, still with the goal to plead for English. We will also see below that the statement on efficiency has no solid basis.

One can easily agree that the choice of English is not very neutral or fair (and so do many people who have no reference to Esperanto). The other statements, however, are surprising. After all, there are about 7.5 billion people in the world today, of whom only about 5 to 6% speak English as their first language;⁶² according to different estimates, there are about 1.5 billion people who speak

61 »Adolf Hitler und Josef Stalin verunglimpften die Sprache, indem sie sie mit den Juden und mit zersetzenden Kräften assoziierten. Es gelang ihnen, sie auszumerzen.« (Iriye & Osterhammel 2012: 853).

62 In the 1990s the estimations for the number of people speaking English as their first language were between 350 and 450 million people (see Crystal, 2006, p. 424; the main question seems to be: what is still English, what is a

English today, or about 20 % of the world's population (see e. g. Crystal 2006: 424). It should also be noted that learning efforts have to be repeated in each generation - and there is a big difference in learning: Esperanto can be learned in much less time than is needed for English (about a quarter of the learning time is assumed). As a result, contrary to the author's assertion (for which he gives no sources or evidence), Esperanto is much more efficient than English, as will be explained below.

5.3.1 Faster learning of Esperanto

While the fact is hardly denied that Esperanto is faster to learn than other languages because of its simple rules without exceptions, the question of how much faster this can be is much more difficult to deal with. It is quite clear that there is no clear answer for all cases - it depends, among other things, on the learner's mother tongue, on the other languages already learned (and on the command of these languages), on the compared target language and on motivation. In the following, some statements on the learnability of Esperanto are presented.

The psychologist Edward L. Thorndike, together with his colleagues Laura Kennon and Helen Eaton, conducted tests on Esperanto as a teaching subject at the Institute of Educational Research of the Teachers College of Columbia University for the International Auxiliary Language Association from 1925 to 1933. The report states (IALA 1933: 6f.):

An average college senior or graduate in twenty hours of study will be able to understand printed and spoken Esperanto better than he understands French or German or Italian or Spanish after a hundred hours of study. Forty hours of teaching and practice will equip a pupil in grade 7 or 8 to understand and use Esperanto as well as two hundred hours of teaching and practice will equip him in French or German (...) On the whole, with expenditures of from ten to a hundred hours, the achievement in the synthetic language [this means Esperanto, as Brosch and Fiedler explain, 2017: 14] will probably be from five to fifteen times that in a natural language, according to the difficulty of the latter.

Thus, in the case of English as the mother tongue and French, German, Italian or Spanish as comparative languages, it was stated here that Esperanto would have to be learned in one fifth of the time required for a comparable level in the other languages. (The report goes up to a factor of 15; this may have been assumed for a comparison with languages such as Chinese or Arabic). However, Brosch and Fiedler (2017: 14f.) quote two papers from 2001 and 2009 which mention shortcomings in the tests such as insufficient scientific verifiability, insufficient numbers of participants or the lack of comparison groups.

Norman Williams (1965), "scholastic director" of the Egerton Park School, Denton (Manchester, Great Britain) reports on the experiences with Esperanto teaching at this school from 1948 to 1965: "A child can learn as much Esperanto in about 6 months as he would French in 3-4 years." Here for

pidgin or creole?). The world population was around 6 billion people in 1999, so the percentage was around $400/6000 = 6.7\%$. Today the number for English as the first language probably is similar, the world population grew to 7.5 billion, so it's around $400/7500 = 5.3\%$. Around 1960, the percentage of speakers with English as the first language was still around 8.3%, if we take 250 million people with English as their first language and 3 billion people in the world. See e. g. Quirk (1964, p. 6): „There are now something like 250 million people for whom English is the mother-tongue or ‚first‘ language (...)“; the world population was estimated at 3,042 million people in 1960; see for this and the other world population numbers e. g. U.S. Census Bureau (2012: 835).

Esperanto one sixth to one eighth of the learning time is given for French, with English as the mother tongue of the learners.

In a learning experiment with pupils (9 years and older) who had Italian as their mother tongue and French as a comparison language, Formaggio (1989: 148) determined that these pupils could achieve the competence achieved in French after 280 lessons already after 75 lessons in Esperanto (cited by Brosch/Fiedler, 2017: 17); it was also stated that the competence achieved in Esperanto after 160 lessons in French could be achieved after 596 lessons. Thus, for Esperanto, a quarter of the time needed for a comparable level in French was given, for Italian as the mother tongue of the learners.

The experience that passive and active language competence can be achieved much faster in Esperanto than in other languages is made also by language learners independent of scientifically accompanied tests. Gotelind Müller and Gregor Benton (2007: 99), who write about China in the 1920s and 1930s, were cited above. There, for people with Chinese as their mother tongue, for Esperanto learning a fifth of the time needed for a similar level in English was estimated (and a seventh compared to French; one year instead of five or seven years).

Overall, it seems plausible to assume that Esperanto can be learned at least by speakers of European Indo-European languages in very many cases in about a quarter (or perhaps a third to a fifth) of the time needed for other related European languages. This is indicated by the school experiments mentioned, although it should be noted that these studies do not go beyond the first 160 hours of Esperanto learning (or 600 hours of learning of an ethnic language); however, due to the pronounced word formation system of Esperanto and the resulting lower number of lexical units to be learned, it can be assumed that a higher level of language proficiency in Esperanto can also be achieved much more quickly than with ethnic languages. For the argumentation in the case of the treated book on language justice it would be fully sufficient to assume that Esperanto can be learned in at most half the time needed for English.⁶³

The significantly faster learnability of Esperanto, by the way, often leads to a higher competence in this language: Those who have learned and practiced Esperanto for 250 hours may have achieved the competence that in many ethnic languages can be achieved only after about 1000 hours. Anyone who has practiced Esperanto for 2,500 hours, will have a language competence corresponding perhaps to that of an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 hours of an ethnic language. In addition it is much easier to express oneself practically without errors, since the grammar and especially the morphology of Esperanto is based on only very few simple rules.

5.4 Will Esperanto become more difficult?

The fact that Esperanto is faster to learn is a statement for the past and the present; in his book on language justice in the section on the simplicity of Esperanto, the author speculates that this would

63 As explained below, the limit up to which Esperanto is more efficient is approximately 75% of the time required for English. This number results from the estimated current ratio of the number of English native speakers to the number of English learners (speakers of English as a second language), approximately 1:4. If this ratio would change, e. g. to 1:5, the limit up to which Esperanto would be more efficient would rise to 80% of the time required for English.

change significantly in the future - but without referring to past developments and without citing evidence or sources (Van Parijs 2011: 43f.). He writes (p. 43): „Secondly, if Esperanto is to be made suitable for all contexts, it will need to beef up its lexical stock massively.“ Federico Gobbo (2016: 57) rejects this presenting Esperanto as it is today: „The morphology permits the construction of a dictionary comparable to major European languages (approximately 120,000 lexical entries) with only 16,000 radicals and twenty or so derivational morphemes (Gledhill 2000). There is no need ‘to beef up its lexical stock massively’, as claimed by the author. The language as it is right now is already suitable for most contexts.“

It is appropriate to consider the mentioned order of magnitude of the different learning time between English and Esperanto—only about one fourth for Esperanto. Then it will become clear that even if only today's English speakers (mother tongue and foreign language) are taken into account, it will require far less overall learning effort, if the English native speakers, i.e. around 5% of the world population, learn Esperanto in each generation and 15% of the world population learn Esperanto instead of English. A calculation shows that the overall learning time for Esperanto (including the English natives) would then be around a third of the time needed for English learning (by those with another language than English).⁶⁴ (The question of enforceability is not the main point here; after all, the book of Van Parijs emphasizes justice. However, as the question often arises: Even if no government would like to accept or help Esperanto, individual persons may continue to learn and spread Esperanto as an additional foreign language besides English, or as their first foreign language, if their mother tongue is English.⁶⁵)

Such an estimation would still be more favourable for Esperanto, if one would assume that Esperanto learning would take half the time for English: Then, in the case that all those learn Esperanto, who are speaking English today, one would come up with around two thirds of the learning effort for English.⁶⁶

64 For simplicity's sake, let us consider 20 people, 5 native English speakers and 15 English learners who each have to spend 1000 hours on English, so in total $15 \times 1000 = 15,000$ learning hours are spent on English. If everyone is learning Esperanto, only about 250 hours are required for the same level of competence, i.e. $20 \times 250 = 5,000$ learning hours, a third of the 15,000 hours for English, 33%. The consideration of e.g. Asian learners, who perhaps have to spend 2,000 or 3,000 hours for the same level of English that many speakers of European languages achieve with 1000 hours, does not change the principle, but instead makes it a bit more pronounced; also here in total considerably less time is to be spent for Esperanto, about a third of the time needed for English: Let's take e. g. 10 English learners who need about 1000 hours for English and 5 English learners who need about 2000 hours. They have to spend $10 \times 1,000 = 10,000$ plus $5 \times 2,000 = 10,000$ learning hours for English, a total of 20,000 hours. If they all learn Esperanto, it's around $10 \times 250 = 2,500$ hours plus $5 \times 500 = 2,500$ hours plus $5 \times 250 = 1,250$ hours for the 5 English natives; a total of 6,250 hours, 31% of the time for English.

65 There are two main ideas about possibly rendering Esperanto the first international language: This could be the consequence of political decisions or the consequence of an increasing spread. Zamenhof in 1910 in Washington expressed his view that he did not believe too much in the help by governments: Our cause will probably be achieved in the first way [i. e. by private persons], because in such a case, like ours, the governments usually come with their approval and aid only when everything is ready. („La celo, por kiu ni laboras, povas esti atingita per du vojoj : aŭ per laborado de homoj privataj, t. e. de la popolaj amasoj, aŭ per dekreto de la registaroj. Plej kredeble nia afero estos atingita per la vojo unua, ĉar al tia afero, kiel nia, la registaroj venas kun sia sankcio kaj helpo ordinare nur tiam, kiam ĉio estas jam tute preta.“) Such a spread may follow the model of „Diffusion of innovations“, see Wunsch-Rolshoven (2013).

66 The calculation would then lead to a total of $20 \times 500 = 10,000$ learning hours, two thirds of the effort for English, 15,000 hours.

The calculation becomes even more favourable for Esperanto, if one considers that certainly not all English native speakers participate so often in international communication that learning a general foreign language like Esperanto would make sense for them; the total expenditure to be estimated for the Esperanto learning of the English native speakers then becomes somewhat smaller than in the calculation.

If one also includes some of the non-English native speakers who have not learned English today because their need for international communication is not yet very important, the comparison looks even more favourable for Esperanto; many of them will want to participate in international communication as economic development progresses. Some people may not have learned English today because the effort for them seemed excessive compared to the expected advantage. This evaluation changes with Esperanto, considering that this language is learnable in a small part of the time needed for English.

The first calculation for 5% English native speakers and 15% English learners (shares of the world population) is advantageous for Esperanto as long as Esperanto saves at least a quarter of the learning time of English, i.e. as long as Esperanto can be learned in a maximum of 75 % of the learning time for English.⁶⁷ This calculation is already added here, because the author argues in his text that Esperanto would become more difficult to learn in the course of use and the dictionaries would become thicker (see below). Such an increase of the learning time for Esperanto would only change the consideration, if the learning time for Esperanto would increase from today's 25 % of the learning time necessary for English to 75 %, i.e. to three times that amount, due to the changes indicated by the author of the book. Before accepting such a massive change, it might be advisable to examine the matter carefully, including the development to date; a few lines without reference, however, do not seem appropriate to predict such a development.

5.5 How voluminous are Esperanto dictionaries?

The author writes that "it is claimed, far less effort is required to learn Esperanto than to learn English as a foreign language" (p. 42). It is surprising that he presents this as a claim, since there have been a number of school experiments (already decades ago), abundant reports by individuals, and since it is also the everyday experience of everyone who learns Esperanto, already after the first lesson; there are also reports from Asians in comparison to English, cf. the already quoted statement of Müller and Benton (2007: 99). It is sufficient for everyone to learn Esperanto for one single hour in order to understand why Esperanto can be learned much faster than other languages.

Even more astonishing is the speculation of the author, that Esperanto would become considerably more difficult by the admission of new words; he tries a prophecy (p. 43): "Hence, it will not take that long for the dictionaries of Esperanto to start looking as bulky as those of other major

67 Let's look again at 5 native English speakers and 15 English learners. The latter have to spend $15 \times 1000 = 15,000$ hours learning English, as in the previous calculation. If everyone were to learn Esperanto and this would take 750 hours (instead of about 250 today; Van Parijs speculates that Esperanto could become more difficult over the years), the total would be $20 \times 750 = 15,000$ learning hours, the same amount as for English. This means that to learn Esperanto as a common language would only then be not more efficient than English, if these 75% of the learning effort for English were reached. In contrast, there is a saving as long as Esperanto, in comparison to English, requires between today's 25% of the learning time and the speculative 75% of the learning time for English.

contemporary languages (...)" . It is undisputed that Esperanto always takes up new word stems – it is only the quantity and the quantitative comparison with other languages that is at issue here; this, too, cannot be explored by a few lines without any reference.

The author has also left aside one crucial detail: Even if Esperanto dictionaries would become as voluminous as those of other languages, Esperanto can still be learned more quickly due to the regular word formation: Let's take the English entries *school*, *pupil* and *to learn*; in the Esperanto dictionary it is *lernejo*, *lernanto* and *lerni*. Those who already know the final syllables *-ejo* (place) and *-anto* (someone who does something) will learn the three new Esperanto words much faster than the English words with three different roots (or the corresponding words in other languages). These endings are used e.g. in *kafejo* (café; *kafo* is coffee) or *kuirejo* (kitchen; *kuri* is to cook) as well as in *biciklanto* (cyclist; *biciklo* is a bicycle) or *parolanto* (speaker; *paroli* is to speak).⁶⁸

Sabine Fiedler (2016: 58-60) has examined the previous and current development of Esperanto, starting with the author's prophecies; it appears that Esperanto tends to absorb fewer new word stems from English than, for example, German. Why should this change in the future? In his book on linguistic justice an argumentation of the author on this point is missing.

6 Classification of situations

One can classify the situations in which untrue statements are made about Esperanto:

- 1) Perhaps most difficult for a linguist is a question in an interview on general or language topics: The question may come as a surprise and there is no possibility of research. Here we learn what the ideas about Esperanto are that have developed over the course of one's life - during one's studies and possibly in later years of working as a scientist.
- 2) In theory, it would be possible to research Esperanto if the scientist made a short marginal remark about Esperanto of up to approximately 20 lines in an article. It seems, however, that linguists as well as other scientists are in many cases so sure about their knowledge and judgement on Esperanto and the Esperanto language community that the topic is not researched. A special research seems not to happen more often than a search for a source for a possible marginal remark that in summer it is usually warmer than in winter - one is simply completely sure.
- 3) A bit more astonishing is that even for the answers of the Esperanto questions in the forum "Ask a linguist" a number of linguists did not research, in particular not concerning the application and spreading of Esperanto.
- 4) With longer texts on Esperanto (more than about 20 lines) or a whole article on the subject, a different approach can be observed. Esperanto is often presented correctly, with corresponding sources. However, in a number of other cases it can also be observed that statements are not substantiated or mere speculations appear, for example about the future development of Esperanto.

68 Cf. also Walther (1970: 14-15) regarding the efficiency of Esperanto. Walther references to Vilho Setälä (1960) who determined that in a text of both languages about 0.25 % of unknown words remain, if one has learned about 10,000 English words or only 2,800 Esperanto roots. About 4,000 of the 10,000 English words may be understood from the context, if a student already knows about 3,000 English words; 3000 more words are not understood.

In the book on linguistic justice (Van Parijs 2013), for example, it is surprising that in about seven pages on Esperanto a few references to literature have been inserted, but actually no source is given that would support the theses and prophecies. In the mentioned blog about Esperanto the author claims that the simplicity of Esperanto and the neutrality of Esperanto could be ‚strongly questioned‘ - but the author does not do this, he does not provide any proof for his assertions (Stefanowitsch 2012b).

This article deals with the image of Esperanto in linguistics, i.e. with what the linguists mentioned know (or believe to know) about Esperanto and what they think about it - not so much with what they would be able to find out if they were to spend more time on Esperanto. The first three types of situations are therefore relevant to this question, not so much the fourth, where the chance of a realistic and plausible representation is basically good, even if, as shown, several texts do not achieve them.

7 Esperanto A and Esperanto B

Between the statements of linguists on Esperanto one can find true and untrue descriptions of Esperanto. One can thus also distinguish at least two meanings for the word "Esperanto": The actual language Esperanto, as it is used in reality, with literature, songs, culture and a worldwide language community, which has a core of intensive speakers, who use Esperanto daily, partly even as their main language, as well as a native speaking community – this language can perhaps be called "Esperanto A". On the other hand, there is a fictitious "Esperanto B", as it is described in the untrue descriptions. This "Esperanto B", which does not exist in reality, has no literature, it is not spoken by anyone, consequently it is not quite expressive and also no "real" language. Esperanto B seems to be the product of theoretical considerations that have taken place in isolated ivory towers. Or also: Esperanto B is close to the state of the former planned language project Esperanto from the year 1887, practically without consideration of the historical development since then.

The remark that Esperanto would have "failed" presumably wants to express that it was not successful to introduce Esperanto as a general international language; here the word "Esperanto" is used less for a language or a language project than rather for the movement for the general introduction of the language. But possibly others also express with it the untrue assumption that it would have been not successful to turn the language project of 1887 into a "real" language in the course of the decades, with language community, literature, word plays etc. Perhaps both are linked - it is clear that a language project that has not become a real language would not be suitable as a general international language. This statement is probably essential: As written, there is possibly little point in presenting arguments to anyone for the promotion or even introduction of Esperanto, as long as that person assumes that Esperanto is not a "real" language at all.

It seems important to be aware of the different meanings of the word "Esperanto" with different people. Communication can only function well if both sides have the same understanding of their notions, or at least have ideas about the notions, which are somewhat close to each other. Anyone who uses the word "Esperanto" without making sure that the other side has arrived in the real world

with his or her ideas about Esperanto runs the risk that the message will not reach its destination and that the speaker himself will at least be perceived as strange.

It should be remembered that Zamenhof (1889: 8) in his first book did not only have the goal of introducing Esperanto as a general language; this was only the third point of his main tasks or „principal difficulties to be overcome“, as he put it. First he writes that he wants to „render the study of the language so easy as to make its acquisition mere play to the learner.“ Secondly he wants to "enable the learner to make direct use of his knowledge with persons of any nationality, whether the language be universally accepted or not; in other words, the language is to be directly a means of international communication.“

Only the third point concerns the general introduction; Zamenhof intends to „find some means of overcoming the natural indifference of mankind, and disposing them, in the quickest manner possible, and *en masse*, to learn and use the proposed language as a living one, and not only in last extremities, and with the key at hand." (Emphasis in the original.)

Obviously it was successful to create a language that can be learned extraordinarily quickly and to which a worldwide language community has formed that has further developed this language. This is to be seen in any case as a success. Whether the third goal of a general introduction may ever succeed, that is written in the stars (to speculate about it without perceiving today's Esperanto reality and the history up to now, that, however, seems rather daring).

8 Possible change of the image on Esperanto

The article shows many incorrect statements of different linguists about Esperanto as well as some takeovers of this false image. It is in the interest of the general public that Esperanto is presented correctly—especially by linguists, who in this field enjoy special credibility as experts for languages.⁶⁹ On the other hand, it is also in the interest of the linguists as a whole that the representatives of their science make correct and verifiable statements about the reality of Esperanto, and not such statements for which the Internet reveals in a few minutes that they are wrong.

It therefore makes sense to initiate appropriate measures to present to a large number of linguists the current state of the Esperanto language community, which has considerably developed quantitatively and thus qualitatively compared to fifty or one hundred years ago, especially with regard to the number of people who speak and hear, read and write Esperanto every day. For this purpose, among others, lectures at linguistic conferences, articles in general linguistic journals as well as newsletters can be considered. Here the emphasis should perhaps be more on the reality of today's Esperanto use in the worldwide Esperanto language community rather than on aspects of language policy. The texts should speak about all the subjects about which the untrue assumptions presented in this essay exist and are carried on as false rumors in circles of linguists until today. The

69 Even if there are probably a considerable number of linguists who do not consider Esperanto to be a "real" language due to false information - outside of linguistics, Esperanto is apparently universally seen as a "language"; as a consequence linguists are sometimes asked about Esperanto by journalists.

cited books are partly still available, the incorrect information on Internet pages is in many cases not changed.⁷⁰

It makes sense to bear in mind that untrue ideas are often quite stuck and people are rather reluctant to give them up. Advertising specialists strive to achieve that the individual persons in the target group receive a certain message at least seven times, so that as far as possible a reaction can be reached in the target group; this may mean far more publications, since information is often over-read. It might make sense to survey linguists from time to time to determine the state of knowledge about Esperanto and its linguistic community.

In the case of Esperanto, it does not seem sufficient that information about the actual use of Esperanto occasionally appears in the press in order to avoid the false assumption of a non-existent language community. For example, in 2014 a linguist wrote on the pages of a German university that behind Esperanto there were no community of speakers whose culture had influenced the development of the language—but on the other hand a few lines below he mentioned that Esperanto was spoken in numerous private communities and associations.

It seems essential for many linguists to know that Esperanto is used by at least a few hundred people every day, in families and other relationships, e.g. at work, and perhaps by one hundred people or more as the main language, i.e. the most used language of these persons. The mere occasional use of Esperanto at events and a little bit in between is probably not sufficient for the assumption of a language community and real language.

The information of wide circles of linguistics about the current state of the Esperanto language and its cultural community as well as parallel and afterwards the information of the broader public about this may require some effort - however it belongs to the ideals of the science to strive for the truth and its spreading, and also to the ideals of a democratic society.⁷¹

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70 In interviews, the publishing newspaper apparently has no obligation to correct untrue information of the interviewee. With own texts such an obligation exists due to the press codes, e. g. „Journalists should: (...) Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.“ (US Press Association - Journalist Code Of Ethics). However, corrections are often omitted.

71 One may object that the examples mentioned show that these ideals are not always sufficiently pursued. However, it is also conceivable that the problem in many of the cases mentioned lies rather in an unfortunate concatenation of untrue individual information. In addition, there is probably an all too great tendency to regard generally believed assumptions as true without verification, especially if they correspond to one's own interests.

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