

A FIRST COURSE IN ESPERANTO

by William Auld

GUIDE

for

TEACHERS

and

HOME

STUDENTS

including **NOTES** on
Individual Lessons



FOREWORD

▶ The aim of this course is to give the student an overall grasp of the language. On completion of the work he will be able to orientate himself in any Esperanto context.

▶ Because in Esperanto there are no exceptions, the whole grammar of the language can be learned in 10 lessons.

▶ Esperanto is an agglutinative language, i.e., its vocabulary depends on word-building. With the exception of the article, prepositions, conjunctions and the correlative words (see p. 28), all Esperanto words are formed by adding ENDINGS to ROOTS, or ENDINGS and AFFIXES to ROOTS, or by joining roots together:

JUN - UL - AR - O
root suffix suffix ending

BON-DEZIR - O - J
root root ending ending

▶ All the ELEMENTS of Esperanto (roots, affixes, endings, prepositions, conjunctions, correlative words) are individually meaningful and can be used in word-building. This signifies that the word potential of the student is MANY TIMES the total number of elements learned.

▶ In this book the student learns the 98 commonest Esperanto roots, together with all the endings and most of the affixes. This gives him an effective vocabulary of over a thousand words. He need never be afraid to CONSTRUCT HIS OWN WORDS using the material he has learned, as his meaning will be clear.

METHOD

The unique combination of special features in the structure and nature of Esperanto calls for learning methods adapted to these features. Progress in the acquiring of Esperanto should be at least five times faster than progress in learning other languages, as has been many times demonstrated, e.g., by Duncan Charters at North Adams State College, Massachusetts, where the "other language" was Spanish. Of course, even Esperanto still demands from its students the two indispensable imperatives:

- (1) CONCENTRATION on learning the elements (at top and left-hand side of each page); and
- (2) PRACTICE in the form of frequent repetition of the textual material.

The teacher should spend as little time as possible on explanations. This course is based on the assumption that Esperanto can be assimilated through familiarity. At the start of Lesson 1 (p. 4), for example, he need only read over the ten Basic Roots, and draw attention to the letters i, j and r (trilled), which need defining for English-speaking students. Then, having simply mentioned the first three endings and their functions, he may proceed at once to repetition of the textual phrases.

The whole lesson should be read through once, the teacher saying each individual phrase or sentence, the class repeating it, and finally the teacher giving an English translation.

Each lesson can easily be covered twice within the hour. On the second reading the teacher may prefer to vary the routine by asking the class (individually or collectively) to supply the English equivalents, or he may be satisfied with omitting these altogether. He should simply fill the hour with constant repetition of the material contained in the lesson. New features, such as the letters ĉ and ŭ encountered in the course of Lesson 1, should be dealt with immediately prior to commencing the section of the lesson in which they first occur.

All lessons proceed according to this basic pattern. Between lessons the students are expected to study the new material and to memorize all the relevant roots, etc.

Between Lessons 3 and 4 and Lessons 5 and 6 there is reading material to demonstrate to the student the extent of his progress. Ideally the study of each of these inter-lessons should occupy 1-1/2 hours, though the teacher may adapt it as he wishes.

Finally, an hour should be given for written translation of the test passage on p. 30. In this respect the teacher should remember that he is a teacher of Esperanto, and not of English. Hence, provided the English text clearly shows that the student has understood the Esperanto text, he need not feel inclined to criticise the stylistic excellence or otherwise of the former.

NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL LESSONS

LESSON 1 (p. 4)

The positional flexibility of the adjective in Esperanto, and its agreement in number with the noun it describes, give it two important advantages:

- (1) Individual Esperantists may, if they wish, reproduce the word order of their national tongue and remain understood by others whose national tongue is different in this respect.
- (2) These qualities make for both clarity and elegance of style in literary and proverbial contexts particularly, e.g., FINO BONA, ĈIO BONA ("All's well that ends well"), or --

Lampgutoj falis al la frunt' malvarma;
Ŝi viŝis ilin per la haroj, larma,

where the last word is clearly seen to describe "ŝi" and not, as position alone might suggest, "haroj."

Remember always that MAL- means "opposite," and does not in itself imply disapproval (as "mal"- words do in English). It can therefore be prefixed to any word which can be thought of as possessing an opposite, even when a synonymous root actually exists.

LESSON 2 (p. 6)

Note how neatly the Esperanto adverb -- one of the language's most characteristic and expressive forms -- reproduces in its simplicity ideas which frequently require an entire phrase in English: "parolos longe" = will speak at length (for a long time); alte = on high, etc.

The rule is worth remembering: Action after "anstataŭ" is shown by the ending -i.

The point about -EC is that it is definitely abstract, and therefore frequently makes very subtle distinctions possible. Hence bono/boneco distinguishes good/goodness (she does good; her goodness is obvious); viva/viveca = alive/lively.

Note that the use of prepositions almost like prefixes is common Esperanto usage: kunvivi = cohabit; priparoli = discuss; prilabori = work on.

Both loĝas bele and vivas bone might be translated by English "live well." The first, of course, is materialistic, the second is a moral judgment!

LESSON 3 (p. 8)

The obvious advantage of the object ending -N (the "accusative case"), is that it liberates word order in the sentence. This is not only stylistically useful, but makes the language easier for peoples of different linguistic backgrounds, whose national languages use different word orders.

Some people have been known to claim that English has long ago "discarded the accusative." This is quite clearly not so. All languages possess an accusative (i.e., a means of distinguishing the subject from the object of a verb) in one form or another. English is one of those languages which indicate the accusative by position, which results in a relatively rigid word order. (It is sometimes forgotten that this in fact has to be learned by the majority of foreigners learning English.) In many other languages, such as those of the Slav family, the accusative is indicated by a distinctive ending (which in turn gives a certain flexibility to the word order). In other languages again, other methods are used; Japanese, for example, uses an object-morpheme wo (as well as a subject-morpheme ga). Esperanto, as always, prefers maximum flexibility.

Since word order is not rigid, one cannot, as in English, indicate a question by altering it. Hence the difference between a statement and a question in Esperanto is shown by the word ĈU at the beginning of the sentence or clause.

LESSON 4 (p. 12)

-ANT, -INT and -ONT are suffixes, and are used to form mainly nouns, adjectives and adverbs. The nouns are invariably persons. (Even the word "Esperanto" itself originally meant "one-who-is-hoping," and was the pseudonym of Dr. Zamenhof, the language's author.)

The use of these endings as adjectives with the verb EST- is illustrated by the table on p. 29. Their use as adverbs is found in Lesson 10.

It must never be forgotten that the verb in Esperanto has only three tenses, whereas English has three forms of the present, three of the past, and even two futures which are sometimes confused. Thus both "I work" and "I am working" are normally expressed by mi laboras, and "he does not work" is li ne laboras. Similarly, "I worked," "I was working" and "I have worked" in all normal contexts are mi laboris.

KIEL may mean "how," "as" or "like." When it means "how," it expects in answer either an adverb or an adverbial phrase: Kiel ŝi parolis? -- Malamikece. In comparisons, tiel . . . kiel . . . is used (tiel eta, kiel infano = as tiny as a child). Li amis ŝin kiel patro = He loved her like a father.

LESSON 5 (p. 14)

It may as well be admitted that -ig and -iĝ sometimes seem difficult to English speakers. This is because English does not clearly differentiate between transitive and intransitive verbs, i.e., those which take an object and those which do not. It should be remembered that Esperanto is intended for use by all nationalities; the Japanese -- who have difficulty with the word la -- see nothing odd about the ig-iĝ distinction. (It is only the use of these suffixes in verbs that causes the difficulty.)

The best thing the English-speaking student can do is, first of all, make himself quite clear about the meanings of the two suffixes, and then to learn verbal roots in pairs as necessary, e.g., finas/finiĝas:

Li finas la laboron.
La laboro finiĝas.

and venas/veniĝas:

La laborulo venas.
Mi veniĝas la laborulon.

Of course, this is necessary only with some roots. The distinction between e.g., scias/sciiĝas/sciigas should be quite clear.

The footnote on p. 14 is very important. Esperanto prefers the direct statement to the oblique: another of the language's characteristics.

About this point the student MUST begin to study the table of correlatives (footnote p. 17 and table on p. 28). This cannot be over-emphasized. Until the student instantly distinguishes e.g., KIE/KIO/KIU/KIAM, etc., he will be severely handicapped in his use of the language. As these correlative words appear somewhere in the majority of Esperanto sentences, their importance is fundamental. On the other hand, the table permits relatively easy assimilation, provided enough concentration is brought to bear.

LESSON 6 (p. 18)

All remarks re -ANT, -INT and -ONT (Notes to Lesson 4) apply equally to -AT, -IT and -OT.

Do not confuse PRO with POR. POR points forward in time, PRO points back.

LESSON 7 (p. 20)

The ending -U used to indicate a direct command causes no difficulty: Donu la manon! But the addition of a subject-pronoun may confuse students who have not previously recognized forms such as "Let's," "let him . . .," "let them . . ." as commands: Ni laboru = let's do some work; li venu = let him come; etc.

When -U appears in a dependent clause (as an indirect command, entreaty, wish, etc.), its use may not be obvious unless one grasps the fundamental fact that indirect statements, commands, etc., reproduce the ending which would be used if these were made direct to the person concerned. E.g., Mi petis, ke li donu al mi helpon. When I made my request, what did I actually say to him? -- "Donu al mi helpon." Therefore when I report the fact at a later date I reproduce these words, as in the above sentence. It should be noted and learned that the expression POR KE ("in order that," "so that") is always followed by the ending -U, e.g.:

Estas bone labori, por ke ni riĉiĝu =
It's a good idea to work so that we get rich.

Do not confuse the suffixes -IND and -EBL. Something may well be havebla that is not havinda! The confusion might arise because the English endings -able and -ible are usually translated by -ind (and not -ebl), e.g., lovable is aminda, desirable is dezirinda, etc.

LESSON 8 (p. 22)

The use of SI is basically simple, if one remembers:

1. It can NEVER be or form part of the subject of a verb;
2. It always refers back to the subject of the nearest verb;
3. The subject of that verb MUST be in the 3rd Person
(and so NEVER mi, ni or vi).

If you are ever in doubt, it is better NOT to use SI than to use it incorrectly (i.e., you are less likely to be misunderstood).

KIA, etc., ending in -A, are adjectival in nature. KIA expects an adjective or adjectival phrase as answer:

Kia homo? Forta.

LESSON 9 (p. 24)

JAM, one of the most useful and expressive words in Esperanto, is rather difficult to "explain" in English. Often it means "already," but even more frequently it translates better by "now": Mi jam devas iri = Now I must go (the time has come for me to go). JAM NE means "no longer": Li jam ne laboras = He is no longer working. Mi jam ne povas iri = I am no longer able to go. These hints, together with the examples given in the course, should enable the student to cope with the word until he can study the definition in Esperanto (in the "Plena Vortaro").

LESSON 10 (p. 26)

Participial adverbs refer to an action carried out by the subject of the sentence.

-UM. It may seem odd to have a suffix "of indefinite meaning." The fact is, however, that it is extremely expressive just because, when used in an unusual context, it leaves so much to the imagination. Until he knows the language better the student will just have to take my word for it, and meanwhile he should just learn the examples given, which are also in common usage.

FURTHER STUDY



Experience in using this course in Scotland, France and at California State University at San Francisco, has clearly shown that as far as reading ability is concerned the student who has completed this course is ready to tackle fairly advanced material. Where a teacher is available to act as a guide, the author's advanced course, PAŜOJ AL PLENA POSEDO, can be tackled. The student working without a teacher would probably prefer to use his ESPERANTO: A NEW APPROACH.

The student's conversational facility (after 14 hours!) will still be weak, and the teacher is recommended to encourage conversation at this stage. He will teach basic conversational formulae, e.g., Ĉu vi volas . . . Kie, kio, kiu estas . . . Al mi ne plaĉas . . . Hieraŭ vespere mi . . . etc., etc.