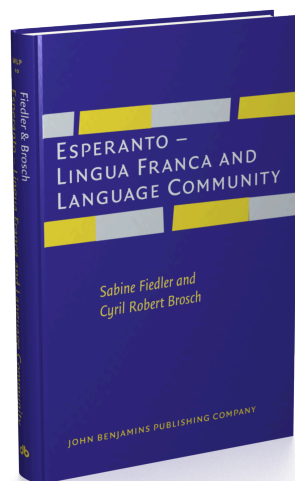


Introduction

Communication in Esperanto

 <https://doi.org/10.1075/wlp.10.c17>

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Esperanto – Lingua Franca and Language Community

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[*Studies in World Language Problems*, 10]

2022. xx, 429 pp.

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Introduction

Communication in Esperanto

Having described Esperanto as a linguistic system, having reviewed its history and the main characteristics of its speech community (including its native speakers), and having examined the symbolic values attributed to Esperanto outside its community, we now invite the reader to get acquainted with its practical use. How do people interact by means of a consciously created language in an international L2 community? How do they make sure they are understood, and how do they cope with the fact that Esperanto is spoken with various degrees of proficiency? Can they be expressive, for example, by making use of metaphors and set phrases, as they like to do in their mother tongues? And what about humour, an important factor in creating cooperative communication? Is spoken Esperanto different from written Esperanto, and what about computer-mediated communication, the language we find in blogs and forums? We will try to answer all these questions in separate chapters in the following fourth part of this book.

Our approach here is to present naturally occurring data. We aim to familiarise the reader with authentic Esperanto, as it is spoken at ordinary Esperanto speech events. We will do so by presenting excerpts from presentations, debates and conversations, together with English translations. In doing so we enter uncharted territory – after all, to the best of our knowledge, spoken data have never before served as the basis for a comprehensive description of the planned language.

Our findings in Chapter 18 to 25 on the features of Esperanto communication (i.e. the use of metacommunication, repair strategies, humour in conversation, the use of phraseology and metaphors, code-switching, written vs spoken Esperanto and language change) will be merged and at the same time tested and expanded in a case study (Chapter 26), where we explore the use of Esperanto as a corporate language in a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Our subject of study does not require any specific order of presentation. We decided to start with metacommunication as a rather general feature that will be familiar to most readers from both mother tongue and foreign language communication, and to continue with characteristics that show the particularities of Esperanto communication more distinctly.

