

Final remarks

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Esperanto – Lingua Franca and Language Community

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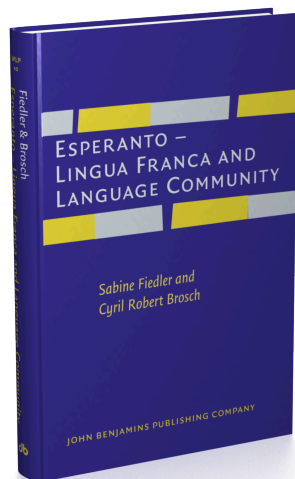
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Final remarks

We started this book by showing that a lack of knowledge of the reality of Esperanto communication easily leads to misconceptions. With our description of Esperanto as a functioning lingua franca, we have tried to provide a solid basis for readers who wish to obtain their own true picture of what Esperanto communication looks like and how it develops.

Our findings lead us to the conclusion that in studies that deal with solutions to problems of international communication, the scenario “use of a lingua franca” should not be discussed as one general option. Everything depends on the type of lingua franca. The fact that in the case of English the lingua franca is also used by native speakers and is therefore not a genuine lingua franca (but asymmetric, in Ammon’s 2012 terminology), makes a distinction necessary, as described in Chapter 2. This book has therefore also helped to further illuminate the phenomenon of lingua francas in general.

Our research has been based on an extensive dataset of naturally occurring communication in a wide variety of speech events that are characteristic of the Esperanto speech community. As with any dataset, it is only a limited selection of communication, and we acknowledge the need for additional research, particularly with a fully transcribed corpus to verify the results of our investigations. Further research should also consider the different linguistic and cultural backgrounds of speakers, and how these influence the language’s use and development. Despite its limitations, the dataset has proven useful as a basis to show convincingly that Esperanto is a sociolinguistic reality, a language in use that enables people to communicate in equitable, self-confident and creative ways. Research on the planned language and its speakers may still be in its infancy, but our findings have provided abundant evidence of the fact that Esperanto could also be a real contender as a lingua franca beyond the spheres described here.

