

REVIEWS / CRÍTICAS / REZENSIONEN / RECENZOJ

Sabine Fiedler and Liu Haitao (ed.). *Studoj pri interlingvistiko / Studien zur Interlinguistik*. Prague: Kava-Pech. 2001. 736pp.

Reviewed by Wim Jansen

Studoj pri Interlingvistiko / Studien zur Interlinguistik is a voluminous study in interlinguistics published in honor of the German interlinguist Detlev Blanke. The book is divided into four sections: I. Language planning and language policy, II. Theoretical and applicational aspects of interlinguistics, III. Esperantology, IV. Terminology and lexicography. Section I is covered by eight contributors and section II by twelve. If we define section I as covering the sociopolitical aspects and section II the linguistic aspects of interlinguistics in general, we may conclude that the twenty contributors to I and II together nicely balance the nineteen who contribute to the Esperanto-dedicated section III. The highly specialized section IV, with only four authors, is a precious bonus to the book. In 668 pages dedicated to interlinguistics and esperantology, including material on terminology and lexicography, forty-three authors of repute in the disciplines in question pay their tribute to Detlev Blanke on the occasion of his 60th birthday (May 30th, 2001). Blanke, too young to be counted among the founding fathers of interlinguistics (these were Otto Jespersen and people around him in the twenties and thirties of the past century), has, without any doubt, been one of the most prominent standard-bearers of this discipline ever since he organized his first interlinguistic seminars in the German Democratic Republic in the mid-sixties.

Twenty-nine contributions are written in Esperanto and fourteen in German. In all cases summaries are provided in the complementary language and in English, and detailed bibliographies are attached to most of the contributions. All this makes the book a useful reference source for researchers and students interested in the field of interlinguistics and esperantology. It is almost axiomatic that a book of this size and of this wide range of topics will suffer from a certain imbalance in quantity (with contributions ranging from a memorandum of just a few pages to full-sized articles of 30 pages) and in quality (some papers seem to have been written without the care one might have expected). The imbalance is also reflected by the absence of items one would have liked to see addressed. These will, of course, vary from one reviewer

to the other, each of us having his or her pet subjects. Thus, part I could have benefited from some material on planned “natural” languages, like Standardized Basque. Also, an account of the shift from Russian to English in the education systems of the former satellite states of the USSR could have been a welcome addition to the discussion of language policies. The recent and politically motivated widening gap between Serbian and Croatian could have been yet another topic. In all three areas competent Esperanto-writing researchers, including native speakers, would have been available. Besides, the latter two examples would have been most appropriate in a book dedicated to Blanke who, himself, grew up in the German Democratic Republic.

In the following sections the four parts of the book are reviewed. In many cases this review is limited to a simple characterization or quotation of the highlights of a contribution. In some other cases a paper is analyzed in more detail. Apart from trying to keep a balance between the different topics under discussion, the choice for a more elaborate review was driven by the reviewer’s personal preference or professional involvement in certain matters.

Part I. Language planning and language policy

Werner Bormann’s contribution to this part is called “Changes in the Balance of Power: Linguistic Implications.” The addition *Linguistic Implications* is not present in the original title in German nor in the Esperanto summary, and rightly so. The English title is indeed slightly misleading since the linguistic aspect of the changes in question is totally underexposed among the many non-linguistic phenomena listed by the author. The few comments under the paragraph header *Interlinguistics* are by no means convincing. There is no real justification for the author’s retrospective optimism about the chances for Esperanto during the Cold War, when, in Bormann’s view, English and Russian were competitors of seemingly comparable orders of magnitude (58–59). Long before the fall of the Berlin Wall disparate events like the US victory over the USSR in the race to the moon (1969) and the worldwide distribution of English-based products of the US entertainment industry, sealed the victory of English over Russian. Under the header *World Language* one would have expected more than just the rhetorical question whether Esperanto has a potential (59). There is a wealth of literature on this very issue, not only in the modern Esperanto press but also elsewhere.¹

Hans Erasmus' "The Language Problem in the European Union" contains an introductory paragraph on the definition of the concept "language problems" which clouds the issue rather than clarifying it (71). Language problems may, of course, be defined as special cases of communication problems, but, in this context, not by applying them to unilingual communities. The issue at stake here is clearly that of not understanding each other in a multilingual environment. The article calls for a project to be set up in the European Union (EU) to study the communication problem in a broad context, taking into account such principles as equality among partners, non-discrimination and human language rights. Esperanto is to be included in this research as one of the options for a solution to the problem. "Who else would be more suited to represent the planned language option than the topical figure of this book, Detlev Blanke?" is Erasmus' rhetorical question. The consideration of Esperanto in a phased feasibility study that addresses the language problem in the expanding EU was taken up in a symposium on Europe's linguistic future that was recently held in Amsterdam.²

Further contributions to part I deal with deliberate interventions in language ("verbal hygiene," "language management" and "language ideology") by Kimura, artificial and natural developments in Romanian (Bociort), Greek as an international language of the past (Irmischer) and the situation of technical-scientific Swedish (Kiselman). This last contribution gives some interesting data on Swedish domain loss in a number of scientific disciplines. In one of his concluding theses Kiselman sketches the shift from "territorial" to "application-oriented" choices as a factor determining when people use one or the other language. Mattusch contributes a detailed description of the present state of foreign language teaching in Europe. Corsetti describes the increasing awareness among scholars and in circles outside the Esperanto movement of the human rights aspects of language usage.

Part II. Theoretical and applied aspects of interlinguistics

Aleksandr Duličenko's "Planned Language: Between Engineered and Ethnic Languages (Report of a Typological Analysis)" seems to have been written hurriedly, without much care for detail and without having enjoyed the benefit of a scrupulous post-editing job. The abbreviation BZ should be read as BD "Basic Dialect" (111). The frequent omission of the definite article is just one of the relatively abundant slavisms that should have been removed for better

readability. In his listing of socialized planned languages Duličenko seems to give too much credit to Occidental, which is recorded by him as an ongoing project (110). In reality, the last periodical written in this language, *Cosmoglotta*, is known to have died in 1985. Sparse Internet activities related to obsolete or obsolescent languages should not be construed as signs of life (in all fairness, this is not what Duličenko does, but it is an argument which is sometimes heard among people involved in planned language research). Duličenko's Esperanto translation of "redundancy" is inadequate: from a functional or safety point of view, something redundant is never "too much" or "excessive." Finally, it is regrettable that no link is provided to Blanke's work in the field of classifying planned languages on a scale of social penetration.³

One of the editors of the book, Liu Haitao, contributes an essay called "Interlinguistics from an Informatics Perspective." In this paper, the Esperanto term *informadiko* or "information science" is understood in its broadest accepted meaning, ranging from statistical analyses of letter or word frequencies to using a planned language as an intermediate representation in machine translation software (148). All these aspects are discussed in detail. The article is transparent and absolutely up to date. Moreover, it provides a multilingual bibliography, quoting references in major European languages, Esperanto and Chinese. The author raises some fundamental issues like that of the removal of the diacritical signs from the Esperanto alphabet (154) — which he is opposed to — and the isolating features the language, according to some researchers, is said to combine with its basically synthetic morphological structure (155). Liu admits that there is not always a clear answer to the questions raised. Perhaps his most daring structural definition of Esperanto is the one he quotes from his earlier work: that of a pasigraphy that makes use of an alphabet, equating in a way the Esperanto endings, affixes and lexical roots to the signs in Chinese (155). It is this isolating feature to which Liu is tempted to attribute the success of Esperanto.

Mark Fettes' contribution "Essence and Future — A Centennial Retrospective" is an excellent analysis of an essay by Esperanto's author Zamenhof, written in 1900 for the French Academy of Sciences.⁴ As Fettes puts it, the interlinguistic tradition in Esperanto began with this very essay in which Zamenhof, a century ago, compiled, reviewed and analysed linguistic and non-linguistic factors in the universal language debate. In revisiting the essay, Fettes holds Zamenhof's analyses and predictions up to the light of the events as they actually took place in the hundred years that elapsed since the first publication. One of the features pointed out by Fettes is Zamenhof's technical approach to

language planning and his firm belief that nothing could stop a useful innovation from being actually implemented, irrespective of any economic, political or cultural factors. The original imbalance between technical and sociological aspects is the thread that runs through Fettes' review. He is sceptical about Zamenhof's view that a common language would protect the national languages against foreign influences. This protective feature of Esperanto is vastly emphasized in the Esperanto movement and, probably, rightly so. When it comes to pushing aside smaller national languages like Dutch, the threat of a *self-proclaimed second language* like Esperanto is likely to be much less than that of a politically and commercially supported language like English which is also *first language* for many people and in many multilingual domains. However, as Sapir wrote back in 1931, "An international auxiliary language should serve as a broad base for every type of international understanding, which means, of course, in the last analysis, for every type of expression of the human spirit which is of more than local interest, which in turn can be restated so as to include any and all human interests."⁵ Sapir's view that "any and all human interests," i.e. also local, regional and national interests, can be expressed in the international language is not often quoted in the literature of Esperanto. An exception to this is the Icelandic writer of Esperanto poetry Baldur Ragnarsson who reviewed in 1971 some aspects of the psychological resistance to planned languages and mentioned the unconscious fear among people that even a language like Esperanto might have a weakening effect on one's mother tongue.⁶

One might wish that more essays, articles or conference speeches by other influential Esperanto writers in the past like Lanti, Privat and Lapenna were analyzed and "revitalized" the way Fettes has done with this century-old publication.

Further contributions to part II address interlinguistics as it developed from cosmoglottics, an earlier theoretical framework of (terrestrial!) universal languages, which is not to be confused with cosmolinguistics or the study of cosmic (interplanetary) communication (Kuznecov). Schubert studies the design and characteristics of modern simplified "controlled" languages used in industry, for example for writing maintenance and repair handbooks. Dašgupto (Probal Dasgupta) writes about the growing awareness among scholars of the need for cognitive neutrality in literary composition. Two papers focus on some historical aspects of planned languages other than Esperanto: Barandovská-Frank unravels the intriguing story of the Moravian Czech Václav Plocek who, at the end of the nineteenth century, combined his work for Volapük with an active stand in the pan-Slavic movement in the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Rátkai describes the exciting days of the co-existence of the rivals Esperanto and Ido at the Budapest Science University during the short-lived Hungarian Council Republic (1919). Lins describes the life and work of Oka Asajirô, Japan's most outstanding biologist of the twentieth century, who created his own universal language project Zilengo, but later (1891) became Japan's first Esperantist. Becker illustrates in great detail the growing importance of the Internet in interlinguistics and provides a list of relevant websites. Smidéliusz reports on experiments carried out at Szombathely University (Hungary, 1998–99) in which students had to design their own language systems. The closing article of part II deals with linguistic inventions in Russian science fiction (Mannewitz).

Part III. Esperantology

“Biblical Translation, Especially in Esperanto: Some Personal Experiences” is the title of Gerrit Berveling's contribution to the esperantology part of the book. The Bible is the world's number-one bestseller in translation and parts of it rank among the earliest translation products in Esperanto. For this reason one would have expected more, much more, than what is revealed here. There is hardly anything Esperanto-specific to be found in the examples given by the author. The attention focuses on the interpretability of the source (e.g. St. Paul's Greek, 462–464) rather than on specific stumbling blocks met when translating into Esperanto. Comparative translation samples are missing. In addition, the article suffers from excessive personal digressions which, in most cases, bear no direct relevance to the topic under discussion.

Sabine Fiedler's contribution called “Die B/blanke Wissenschaft — Ludic Communication in Esperanto,” in itself a wordplay in German, is yet another pearl added to the jewelry she has already produced on wordplay and the phraseological potential of Esperanto.⁷ The paper is a systematic description of a number of possibilities offered by the language as a result of its structure and of the culture that has grown around it in just over a century. The techniques she describes are abundantly illustrated by examples from ordinary speech and from the literature. The statement that as a planned language Esperanto has been designed to be as unambiguous as possible is absolutely true. It has been a design goal dating back to the last quarter of the nineteenth century for creators of languages based on ethnic material. Fiedler's footnote reference to the original IALA criteria of 1937 (597) is therefore a bit surprising. These

criteria were indeed inspired by the experience gathered with Esperanto and Ido, but they lost much of their power after Stillman took over the research from Collinson (1939) and initiated the development of the language that was to become known as Interlingua (1951). The requirement of unity between form and meaning was a cornerstone in Zamenhof's philosophy from the very beginning and even goes back to Schleyer's views on natural languages and the non-ambiguity requirements he formulated for his Volapük.⁸

Fiedler is very clear in her concluding remarks on the creative possibilities in Esperanto and lists positive and negative language-internal and language-external factors (600). An external factor that put the brakes on creative activities and is not explicitly mentioned by Fiedler is that in Esperanto there is little or no interaction between the individual speaker and public performers like comedians, theater players, actors, singers and radio and television speakers. Due to this lack of feedback the propagation speed of linguistic inventions remains lower than in institutionalized ethnic languages.

Further contributions are given by Tonkin, who delivers a detailed account of esperantology both from an endogenous and an exogenous point of view, running from the early twenties to the most modern achievements, like Gledhill's corpus-based Esperanto grammar.⁹ Strictly "technical" is Vitali's contribution which deals with the assimilation processes affecting the phoneme *n* in Esperanto and the role of syllable boundaries and prosodic effects in distinguishing between words. Statistical issues in Esperanto are addressed by Dominte (phoneme statistics) and by Haszpra (letter frequencies). Mattos teaches the correct usage of the morphologically marked accusative in Esperanto by developing two rules (which in the end collapse into one) without recourse to complex linguistic terminology. Though descriptively interesting, the advantage over a traditional parsing exercise is not obvious. Prytz predicts an increase in the use of infinitives preceded by prepositions in Esperanto (following the analogy of *sen* "without" and *por* "in order to"). He quotes *pri* "about" as the prime candidate for expansion of this usage, but unfortunately without any examples of observed occurrences.

Krause describes the century-old process of word creation in Esperanto and the increasing need to adopt words from non-European languages to reflect the growing importance of their associated cultures and environments. Löttsch proposes exploiting the readily available morphological tools in Esperanto to generalize the distinction between a "national" or "ethnic" representative on the one hand and a "citizen" on the other, as can be done in some languages. This would add an important distinctive feature to Esperanto at no cost. Otto Back

describes traces of Esperanto in the now extinct planned language Occidental, once a serious naturalistic alternative to the more schematic Esperanto.

The problem of translatability in general, and into Esperanto in particular, is extensively discussed in Salevsky's paper "Will Those Evening Bells Sound Right in Esperanto Too?" Of fundamental historical value is Dietterle's account of the outstanding role of his grandfather, Johannes Dietterle, between 1916 and 1932 as the director of the influential German Esperanto Institute and his struggle to have Esperanto submitted to serious scientific scrutiny. A particular tribute to Blanke is Wollenberg's account of the history of Esperanto in Berlin with prominent actors like Zamenhof, Cseh and Wüster. To these we may now add Blanke, whose residence has been Berlin for the past few decades. Galor describes the Esperanto community, or communities, with their different ideals, objectives and doubts as these may fluctuate with time. Two contributions (by Künzli and Wacha) refer to the mathematician René de Saussure (1868–1943), brother of the linguist Ferdinand, who laid the foundations of an extensive morphological description of Esperanto, but who also embarked on numerous proposals to improve the language. Dahlenburg studies the presence of politically coloured words and sentences in Esperanto textbooks published in the GDR between 1965 and 1996. Melnikov analyses in detail the potential and use of Esperanto as an emotive medium which includes the full range of rhetorical figures and ample reflections to Esperanto-internal cultural references.

Part IV. Terminology and lexicography

Fellmann contributes an interesting article under the title "Big Numbers in Esperanto." Numerals in excess of one million are different in meaning between the USA and Europe, but even within Europe there is no absolute uniformity. Esperanto lexicographers have not really succeeded in making a case for a unique numbering system in their language which, indeed, reflects much of the above-mentioned confusion (e.g. *biliono* being 10^{12} according to the European convention, but 10^9 according to the American convention, p. 654).¹⁰ The author, quoting from the authoritative *Plena Ilustrita Vortaro* (Complete Illustrated Dictionary) lists the US and European systems with their Esperanto translations, and adds an Esperanto-based variant, proposed as a logical and fully coherent set of numerals as a substitute for the national-based systems. This set is derived from the quasi-suffix — *iliono* that is made productive for the occasion. The results might be coherent within the boundaries of Esperanto

morphology, but would lead to forms which are internationally not readily acceptable. One wonders why Esperanto should take the lead in normalizing a numbering system, rather than waiting for an international organization like ISO to standardize things one way or the other, and then adapt the Esperanto forms accordingly.

Fellmann cites German and Dutch as languages with an unambiguous preference for one system (the so-called German subsystem within the European system, p. 658), whereas British English is said to have shifted towards the American English numbering system.¹¹ It is worth noting here that, judging from the general and popular scientific press, Dutch may not be as stable as claimed by the author and may indeed be sliding towards the American system.¹²

In addition to the contributions mentioned above, this part of the book features well documented articles by Hoffmann (on railway terminology in Esperanto) and Marinov, Simon, Ullrich and Weckwerth (on forestry terms in Esperanto). The former article contains some interesting observations on the role Esperanto could play in international concept standardization. These observations are worth extrapolating to multilingual environments in which Esperanto could serve as a pivot language in interpreting and translating. In such environments it would be natural for the pivot language to assume the role of a “yardstick language” for concept definitions. The closing article by Koutny is a fundamental description of the role of dictionaries, the use of extensive text corpora and the creation of electronic dictionaries in modern Esperanto lexicography.

Biographical data for all contributors, a list of Blanke’s most important publications and a full index complete the book. *Studoj pri Interlingvistiko / Studien zur Interlinguistik* is an indispensable overview for anybody interested in the state of the art in language planning in general and esperantology in particular. If it fails to address all possible issues of relevance, it certainly covers most of them.

Notes

1. See for example Jouko Lindstedt, “Kaj la estonteco?” [And the future?], *Esperanto* 89 (1996): 122–123; Robert Phillipson, “Approaching Linguistic Human Rights,” in Miklos Kontra et al. (ed.), *Language: A Right and a Resource* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 1999); Tazio Carlevaro, *Cxu Esperanto postvivos la jaron 2045?* [Will Esperanto survive the year 2045?] (Bellinzona: Hans Dubois, 2000); Claude Piron, “Communication linguistique. Étude comparative faite sur le terrain,” *LPLP* 26 (2002): 23–50.

2. *The Linguistic Future of Europe — Following a Plan?* Amsterdam, December 17, 2002. Proceedings forthcoming.
3. The most recent version is Detlev Blanke, “Vom Entwurf zur Sprache,” in Klaus Schubert (ed.), *Planned Languages: From Concept to Reality, Part I, Interface: Tijdschrift voor Toegepaste Linguïstiek*, 15.1 and 15.2 (2000): 37–89.
4. See for example Dietterle’s compilation of L.L.Zamenhof *Originala Verkaro* [Original Works] (Leipzig: Hirt, 1929): 276–312; or Ludovikito’s more recent collection *Originalaro 2* [Originals, vol. 2] (Kyoto, 1990): 973–1026.
5. Edward Sapir, “The Function of an International Auxiliary Language” in Herbert N. Shenton, Edward Sapir and Otto Jespersen, *International Communication: A Symposium on the Language Problem* (London: Kegan Paul, 1931): 69–70. Reprinted in Edward Sapir, *Culture, Language and Personality*, ed. D. Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961).
6. Ragnarsson, Baldur “La ĉefa obstaklo al Esperanto estas psika” [The main obstacle to Esperanto is psychological], *Esperanto* 64 (1971): 23–24.
7. See in particular Sabine Fiedler, *Plansprache und Phraseologie. Empirische Untersuchungen zu reproduziertem Sprachmaterial im Esperanto* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1999).
8. In actual fact, it is his objection 11 against natural languages, the one that deals with vagueness and indefiniteness, i.e. ambiguities and homonymy. See: Johann Martin Schleyer, *Volapük. Grammatik der Universalsprache für alle gebildete Erdbewohner* (1884).
9. Christopher Gledhill, *The Grammar of Esperanto: A Corpus-based Description* (Munich and Newcastle: Lincom Europa, 1998; second edition 2000).
10. Gaston Waringhien (ed.), *Plena Ilustrita Vortaro* [Complete Illustrated Dictionary]: (Paris: SAT, 1970): 110.
11. A comparison between Dutch-English dictionaries published in the seventies and eighties seems to indicate that this shift was officialized in British English between 1981 and 1989, as reported by the magazine on Dutch language issues *Onze Taal* “Our Language” 2001–6: 135.
12. See a detailed letter to the editor of *Onze Taal* “Our Language” 2001–2/3: 57 as a reaction to the use of the word *triljoen* in Dutch where *biljoen* was meant (10^{12}). In the reported case *triljoen* was clearly a loan translation from an American source.

Reviewer’s address

Rembrandtweg 1
NL 2202 AR Noordwijk
Netherlands
Jansenwimh@cs.com

About the reviewer

Wim Jansen, Lecturer in Interlinguistics and Esperanto at the University of Amsterdam, holds degrees in aerospace engineering and in comparative linguistics with a specialization

in Basque. Formerly employed by the European Space Agency, he is author of the first Basque-Dutch dictionary (1996), of “Beginner’s Basque” for English-speakers (2002), and of other publications on Basque, Dutch, language dominance, planned languages and language policy.



Robert Phillipson. *English-Only Europe? Challenging Language Policy.* London and New York: Routledge. 2003. 240 pp.

Reviewed by Ulrich Ammon

Phillipson gives an account of the language situation in the European Union (EU) and the EU’s language policy and language regulations. This account is succinct as well as detailed and — with a few minor exceptions, some of which will be mentioned below — correct and as complete as one would reasonably expect. The book’s main purpose is, however, as the subtitle indicates, to criticize the EU’s language policy, or lack of such a policy, and to open up avenues for improvement. The latter attempt especially, whose difficulty anyone familiar with the language situation in the EU can imagine, leaves room for questions and doubts. At the same time it is probably the part that will attract most attention, though the book’s other sections are also worthwhile reading for anyone interested in language planning and language policy.

The book unfolds in six chapters plus an appendix with five documents, a section with notes and an index. There is no bibliography — which is a problem, since bibliographical information in the notes is often taken up again only in abbreviated form, requiring lengthy searches for complete titles. Notes are never a satisfactory substitute for a bibliography, since they are harder to check for complete references. Some relevant titles are, in fact, missing altogether, such as Coulmas (1991), and *Sociolinguistica* 8 (1994), *English Only? In Europa/ in Europe/ en Europe*, but on the whole coverage of literature is comprehensive.

The first chapter, “The risks of *laissez faire* language policies,” stresses that the hitherto typical EU approach of abstaining from language policy can have undesired effects, since it is impossible to control events. Whether it should be called a *laissez faire* policy is another question: that term should perhaps be reserved for an intentional policy of doing nothing, which would not be true for the EU. Rather the EU is shown to have done something, but — given its proclaimed principles — not enough: it has introduced only very general regulations regarding the status and function of languages, and not applied