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**[Review of: D.J. Peterson (2015) The art of language invention: From horse-lords to dark elves, the words behind the world-building]**

Gobbo, F.

*Published in:*  
Language Problems and Language Planning

*DOI:*  
[10.1075/lplp.00008.gob](https://doi.org/10.1075/lplp.00008.gob)

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Gobbo, F. (2017). [Review of: D.J. Peterson (2015) The art of language invention: From horse-lords to dark elves, the words behind the world-building]. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 41(3), 304-306. DOI: 10.1075/lplp.00008.gob

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David J. Peterson. *The art of language invention: From horse-lords to dark elves, the words behind the world-building*. New York: Penguin, 2015. 292 pages.

**Reviewed by Federico Gobbo**

It is rare to read reviews of non-academic books in a serious academic journal like this one. However, in this case, such a review is useful. If we look at interlinguistics – the science of planned languages – from a historical perspective, initially there were the philosophical languages, mainly proposed in the seventeenth century. Major examples of them were proposed by Dalgarno, Wilkins or Leibniz (for a detailed analysis, see Maat, 2004), and they are interesting mainly for logicians. Then, there were International Auxiliary Languages (IALs), including Volapük and Esperanto and its rivals (for a recent overview, see Garvía, 2015). The last serious IAL proposed in the history of interlinguistics is Interlingua, proposed by the IALA in 1951. Does this mean that since the second half of the past century no new interesting planned language appeared? The answer is negative, and the proof is contained in this book, which deals with the phenomenon of “Hollywood languages,” that is, languages planned from scratch in order to be used in a diegetic universe.

Peterson is himself a central figure in this field, which involved the founding of the Language Creation Society, and, early in the twenty-first century, categorized the majority of planned languages proposed since that time, using the classification system originally suggested by Couturat and Leau (1903). The author transformed a passionate hobby into a profession: his business card reads “alien language expert,” and his most famous planned language is certainly Dothraki of the Games of Thrones TV series. Moreover, he has created dozens of such languages for various Hollywood productions. Throughout *The art of language invention*, there are anecdotes about the emergence of this third phase of

interlinguistics (after the philosophical languages and the IALs) in the early 1990s, when the worldwide web came into existence. Unfortunately, this connection with the interlinguistic heritage is not clearly stated by the author, even if Esperanto, Ido, and the languages created by Tolkien are briefly mentioned (pp. 8-9). The terminology used in the circles of Hollywood language enthusiasts is not very helpful because they refer to the act of planning a language from scratch as “conlanging,” meaning “building constructed languages.” In the “Introduction” of this book, the author tries to provide a list of definitions of key concepts, from very common terms like “dialect” or “code” to specific terms of the conlanging argot: “artlang,” “auxlang” (which is simply IAL, of course!), “engelang,” and few others. Since this is not an academic book, no bibliography is included. As a result, IALs are treated as equally important to, or even as less important than, languages planned for artistic purposes. This is incorrect from a historical and a sociolinguistic point of view. Nevertheless, the book is quite interesting.

We can read the book as a non-standard introduction to general linguistics. Starting from phonetics and phonology, the reader – who is supposed to have the intention to plan a language *ab initio* – is advised by a lot of information which pertains to the area of language planning, including morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics. For example, a lot of attention is devoted to the issue of graphization, i.e. the choice of the writing system of a given language, which is crucial in planned languages and language planning in general, and which is extensively presented in Chapter 4, perhaps the most detailed part of the book. Examples are taken by natural languages and extant planned languages – mainly Hollywood languages – for the sake of comparison.

In the case of natural languages, the emphasis is often put on “exotic” languages. Often language planners look after structural traits far from the languages we are most used to, i.e. the ones belonging to the European linguistic area, and in particular to the Standard Average European (Haspelmath, 2001).

This is often a central issue if the language planner, prototypically an American English native speaker, wants to plan an “alien” language. As the author puts it, “a lot of aliens in television and film are

humanoid, and differ from humans in ways that really have nothing to do with language ... they're simply not *linguistically* alien enough to warrant anything else than a spoken human language.” The result is that, for instance, noun classes are explained through languages like Dyirbal or Swahili, and so the book can also be considered as an unusual journey into language typology. Challenging topics such as the concept of ergative are included in the book, and they are explained effectively in plain language (in this special case, through English words such as “escapee” and “employee”). On occasion, there is a bit of humor: “grammatical gender gets a bad rap for the wrong reasons. People see examples like ... *Mädchen* [ˈmɛt.çən] “girl” (neuter gender, German) and cry, “*Sexism!*”. And, listen, I will not say such cries are without merit, but first let me lay out all the relevant facts” (p. 113).

In conclusion, the book has the merit of being the first extensive presentation of the third phase of interlinguistics directly from one of the most important voices in the field. It also casts a new light on the discipline. Unfortunately, for many contemporary scholars, interlinguistics is only directed backwards, as if it were merely a Benedictine effort to preserve the glorious past of auxiliary languages almost forgotten. Hollywood languages show that the lessons learned from interlinguists and language planners of the past are still useful nowadays, even if the result is not what expected interlinguistic pioneers.

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Ulrich Lins. *Dangerous language: Esperanto under Hitler and Stalin, Vol. 1*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 299 pages. (Translated by Humphrey Tonkin)

Ulrich Lins. *Dangerous language: Esperanto and the decline of Stalinism, Vol. 2*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 198 pages. (Translated by Humphrey Tonkin)

### **Reviewed by Ulrich Ammon**

These two volumes – or “this book” to which reference in the singular seems justified – have a remarkable history, which the prefaces, especially in volume 1 (2016, pp. vii-x) but also in volume 2 (2017, pp. vii-ix), narrate. The book’s history already sheds some light on the history of its subject: the language Esperanto and its promotional movement, important strands of which are analyzed convincingly under scrutiny. It thus describes and explains segments of global linguistic history which have largely been sidestepped by mainstream linguistics and even by contemporary studies of language and globalization. A sketch of the content of volume 1 was published in Japan in 1973 in Esperanto, followed by an expanded version in 1975 in Japanese, and a more complete version in Germany in 1988 in German. The extension for the present version appeared in 2016 in the Netherlands in Esperanto (Rotterdam: Universal Esperanto Association), from which it was translated to the present English version. It is based on additional studies of archival materials which came to light after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

The book starts out with the origin of Esperanto, mentioning its founder, Lazar Zamenhof, and his painful personal experiences with societal multilingualism in his then Russian, now Polish, hometown Białystok, which kindled and strengthened his motivation to create a neutral second language for the entire world as a means of communication beyond individuals’ own regional and native tongues. It was not intended to replace the latter, but rather, to serve as an additional tool, which should support the maintenance of local, native tongues for everyday usage. As early as the first chapter, Lins also describes Zamenhof’s additional motives for his project, namely of using Esperanto to tone down the widespread anti-Semitism he had found associated with, or even exacerbated by, Jewish language varieties and

shibboleths (especially Yiddish), and of strengthening global humanism (“Hilelismo”/ “Homaranismo”), which he however subordinated to his language project and largely abstained from propagating (pp. 24-33).

The Esperanto project encountered two political endeavours and underlying ideologies which opposed it fundamentally. These were, first, to protect existing power structures and privileges which were feared to be endangered by a global language and its communicative potential and, second, linguistic imperialism, i.e. promoting one's own national language to a global standing. Both aspirations were, obviously, not readily compatible with the Esperanto objective of establishing a neutral global lingua franca with its implication of unimpeded international communication. Both objections come into play in the book, though from different sides and at different times.

The Esperanto movement started, naturally, in Zamenhof's own country, Tsarist Russia. There, its followers met with the enthusiastic sympathy of congenial individuals and groups, but soon also encountered growing resistance, and also censorship, by the state (pp. 10-17), which got them entangled in an “uphill battle to prove their socio-political loyalty to the authorities” (p. 17). One reason for antipathy from the side of the authorities was the additional language skills required by censors. The movement, however, soon expanded beyond Russia to Western Europe (pp. 18-24), where, in particular, French intellectuals welcomed it as being in line with the goals of enlightenment. In Western Europe the Esperantists, however, also encountered interference from prominent linguists who wanted to “reform” the new language and rename it “Ido” (pp. 31 f.), an obstacle which was however finally overcome by founding the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) in 1908, initiated by the Swiss enthusiast Hector Hodler (p. 32).

The consolidation of the movement was seriously interrupted by World War I and its aftermath (pp. 35-83). It had made slower progress in Germany than in France, even before the War, because of the more intense nationalism there – due in part to the belatedness of the German nation (as compared to France or Britain [Plessner, 1959]) which had founded its nation state only in 1871 (“Deutsches Reich”) –

a belatedness, pointed out by Lins (without using the term, p. 36), which has meanwhile been established as a partial explanation of Germany's fall from civilisation in Nazi times, without implying an excuse. The objections against Esperanto became occasionally hysterical, when it was characterized as "an instrument for the eradication of the German language" or when the renowned chemist and Noble Prize winner Wilhelm Ostwald was criticised for his support of Esperanto (pp. 38-40). Ostwald actually shifted sides at the beginning of WW I from promoting Esperanto to linguistic nationalism and supporting endeavours of raising the German language to global standing by a linguistically simplified variety called "Weltdeutsch" [Global German] (p. 49; see also Gordin, 2015, pp. 159-163; Ammon, 2015, p. 1080), without however receiving official support.

During the time following World War I, France's language policy in the League of Nations (pp. 47-62) might, however, have had more enduring negative effects on the spread of Esperanto. In the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles, France had been forced to accept English, in addition to its own language, as the League of Nation's second official language. France was in no mood to accept a third, and yet another, official language of the organisation, which it feared would further water down its own language's prominence. It therefore put up an obstinate and finally successful fight against the inclusion of Esperanto. Beyond her "timorous concern for the dominant position of the French language," France found allies with slightly different motivations who "were all too aware of [Esperanto's] functionality" (p. 61) and, consequently, its potential threat to their own language's standing. One could add that these objections also meant the failure of a move proposed to the League by the *British* and the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* to consider promoting an "International Auxiliary Language" like "Esperanto" for international scientific communication (*Report of the Committee ... 1922*; Ammon, 2015, pp. 683, 691). Thus, Esperanto was barred from the League of Nation's language regime. This might well have effected its exclusion from the language regime of the future United Nations Organisation, the continuation of the League of Nations, or even prevented consideration of its inclusion.



Otherwise the fate of Esperanto showed mixed perspectives during the 1920's, with regular state funding in some countries, e.g. in Germany (p. 68), and scepticism or even hostility in others (pp. 70-83). However, with Nazism taking over in Germany, its fate clearly changed for the worse. Esperanto was now not only seen as incompatible with the Nazis' striving for global dominance, and especially their somewhat latent linguistic imperialism, but also with their anti-Semitism. Some peripheral German hostility "was accompanied even before the First World War by an element of anti-Semitism," with reference to Esperanto "as 'this Jewish world language' "(p. 40), but now this became inflated by the Nazi nightmares of Jewish and, at the same time, Communist world conspiracy (pp. 85-156). Lins describes in great detail the major objections and moves against Esperanto in Nazi times, coming from nationalist language organisations (especially "Allgemeiner Deutscher Sprachverein" [General German Language Organisation]; pp. 89-91), from Hitler himself (p. 95) and from other Nazi leaders. An example is the infamous SS leader Reinhard Heydrich, who interrupted an Esperantist, whom he had summoned and who defended his endeavours with reference to humanism, with comments like: "The idea of a human conscience is a Jewish creation and is of no interest to us!" (p. 124). The Esperanto project's aspiration for – ideally uninhibited – global communication also seemed incompatible with the Nazis' efforts towards total control. Their hostility against Esperanto went to such extremes that numerous Polish Esperantists were studiously murdered after the German conquest of the country, including the entire Zamenhof family (pp. 125 f.). Nazi policy also functioned as a model for occupied countries like the Netherlands or Belgium or for countries with congenial governments like Portugal or Spain, though nowhere reached the rigour practised by the Nazis themselves (pp. 133-145). The fact that these repressive policies had devastating effects on the Esperanto movement hardly needs to be mentioned. But it deserves pointing out that "Japan was the only country that did not follow the Nazi model" (pp. 144), the only country allied with Nazi Germany that is, where Esperantists were not harassed.

After having been subdued in Tsarist Russia as mentioned above (and described in Vol. 1, pp. 10-17 under the subtitle "Birth Pangs: The Tsarist Censor"), the Esperantists seemed to have found the ideal political ground for thriving in the Soviet Union, after the Revolution. Lins accordingly expresses his

description of the development under the subtitle “Post-revolutionary Hopes” (Vol. 1, pp. 159-167). He then devotes the biggest part of his book to the history of the Esperanto movement in the Soviet Union (Vol. 1, pp. 159-277; and practically the entirety of Vol. 2).

It seems impossible to even sketch the multitude of details which Lins displays with great care and empirical underpinning, including numerous original quotes, which make fascinating reading for anyone interested in the topic. I choose, instead, to restrict my report to some fundamental aspects, which span from the initial inspiring reception of Esperanto as offering the literally ideal solution for the Soviet Union's language problems to the movement's gradual demolition and final downfall – with some final remarks on its recent modest recovery.

Esperanto seemed to fit precisely into Lenin's revolutionary language policy of respecting all minority languages and preventing their being dominated by any larger or official language, especially Russian (for the policy's concise characterization cf. pp. 244 f.). Unsurprisingly however, various objections arose against Esperanto and its protagonists, which made the road to its acceptance for the Socialist Revolution somewhat bumpy. Consider, for example, the criticism of the language being linguistically deficient (e.g., p. 164) or only artificial and not natural, or – politically more relevant – not having arisen from the working class but the bourgeoisie or, even worse, the “petty bourgeoisie” (e.g. p. 200).

Difficulties grew serious, however, when the use of Esperanto in the Soviet Union became incompatible with central aspirations of the Esperanto project, namely the unimpeded communication beyond linguistic and national borders, so that Soviet objections came to resemble, in certain respects, those of the Nazis. These aversions, which were based on the – not entirely unjustified – fear that the entire Soviet Revolution might be endangered which developed under Stalin's regime, after Lenin's death. The initial enthusiasm for Esperanto was based on the hope that the language could be used to promote Soviet ideas beyond the Soviet Union as well as within by informing the proletariat, especially the workers, of the progress and blessings of life in the revolutionized Soviet Union and thus to accelerate the

Socialist World Revolution. The Esperantists inside and outside the Soviet Union had hoped that the international exchange of information on life in the post-revolutionary society would strengthen socialist endeavours everywhere compared to life under capitalism.

The effect was, however, the opposite. The realistic description of life on both sides revealed that life in the Soviet Union was considerably more deprived and confined than in various capitalist countries, especially the economically more developed ones. Such unwelcome messages and their potential effects on political preferences were soon discovered under Stalin's rule, with the result that uncontrolled communication was brought to an end. Exchanges from abroad were intercepted and outgoing messages became restricted to the hands of reliable party members whose correspondence was reduced to prefabricated messages with whitewashed and embellished information. They became so obviously fake and sterile that Western correspondents broke off the exchange. Soviet Esperantists who did not cave in were severely punished (Vol. 2, pp. 37-68, especially chapter Part I. 5 "Silence Descends," pp. 53-68). Lins summarizes this kind of policy in the statement: "The extent of the persecutions in the Soviet Union exceeded that of the Nazis." (Vol. 2, p. 169). It, in fact, brought "The Great Silence" upon Esperanto over the entirety of Eastern Europe, when the area came under Soviet control after World War II (pp. 71-83). This was accompanied by a turn to Russian linguistic imperialism, especially the general introduction of the Russian language as an obligatory school subject (cf. e.g. Haarmann 1992). Only after Stalin's death could the Esperanto movement be revived (Vol. 2, pp. 107-121), though pressure remained for some time that it was more worthwhile learning Russian than Esperanto (p. 118). Recent developments are, however, encouraging in scattered parts of Russia and Eastern Europe (pp. 107-161), though remaining on a similarly modest level to that in numerous other countries.

In his final conclusion and assessment of the present situation (pp. 163-175) Lins points out that Esperantists now "enjoy unprecedented freedom and opportunities for action" – but "[p]aradoxically" [...] still remain somewhat deviant outsiders." When they "observe the globalization of the English language", and ask themselves why their own project has not lived up to its erstwhile hopes, the answer that seems to stand out from among the various reasons is a revival of linguistic nationalism (p. 175).

Lins' book impeccably describes and explains the obstructive policies against Esperanto exercised by countries like Germany, Russia and also France and their devastating effects. But I wonder – perhaps because of my own ignorance – whether we would not need another book on the English-speaking countries' policies vis-à-vis Esperanto. Would it perhaps reveal that they, though never openly suppressing the language, have hardly ever promoted it, instead of preferring to promote their own language – I am referring here to the states' policies; the outstanding commitment of numerous individuals are out of the question? Would serious endeavours, with the resolved support of the most powerful language group, i.e. the English-speaking countries, still have a chance to move the global language constellation into the direction Zamenhof once dreamed of? Or will the emerging renewed efforts towards more “linguistic justice” (van Parijs, 2011) be irreversibly reduced to attempts at balancing the enormous privileges of native speakers of English?

The book is perfectly composed and reader-friendly. I am, however, satisfying my needs as a reviewer by pointing out as a tiny flaw, which is hardly worth mentioning, the omission of titles for subchapters in the table of “Contents” for Vol. 1 (pp. xi f.), which would enhance quick orientation. The table lists the titles of the seven main chapters, like the first “1. The Emergence of Esperanto”, but not the more detailed subtitles such as “Zamenhof and the Origin of Esperanto” (p. 3), “Birth Pangs: The Tsarist Censor” (p. 10), “Westward Advance” (p. 18) and “An Esperanto of Ideas” (p. 24), etc.

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#### **Reviewed by Hartmut Haberland**

This book is a completely rewritten and significantly expanded version of Ammon's earlier book with a similar title and topic, *Die internationale Stellung der deutschen Sprache*, of 1991. The 1991 book had 633 pages, the 2015 book just over twice as many, i.e. 1295 pages.<sup>1</sup> The book is an attempt at mapping what one could call the global ecology of the German language. Discussions of the global

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Florian Coulmas, Peter Eisenberg and Robert Phillipson for their helpful comments on a draft of this review.

language regime usually focus on the unprecedented globality (in the sense of Beck, 1997) of the English language; an ecological approach that views English in its interplay with other languages is largely restricted to endangerment discourses. Studies of the ecology of languages to which de Swaan concedes the status of “supercentral languages” (de Swaan, 2001) are relatively rare (an example is Coulmas, 2008). Impressionistically, one could conceive de Swaan’s “central” and “supercentral languages” as those that at all have some international status, which for most of these languages seems to be under-researched or under-documented. For that reason alone a book like this is welcome.

Some people might ask if it wouldn’t be more useful to have a book like this one available in English since more readers could access the information contained in it. But one should not overrate the difficulty of reading a book in German for linguists, who have some rudimentary reading ability in German. (There are a fair number of illustrations, diagrams, figures, tables, lists and numerical information in the book that is more widely accessible anyway.) It is worth noting that Ammon does not translate or even paraphrase quotes in English or French.

The book consists of twelve large chapters with subchapters; at the end, we find both a „Bibliographie“ and a „Sachregister“. The bibliography of over 100 pages (pp. 1155-1273) is indeed a bibliography, not a mere list of references. The subject index (pp. 1275-1295) is of adequate length and useful, but in view of the extensive bibliography one would have wished that an index of names also had been provided (to be able to see where any particular book or article is discussed).

The first chapter contains terminological and theoretical considerations, including a useful taxonomy of types of international and interlingual communication,<sup>2</sup> and a clarification of the concept of *lingua franca*. The model – under the heading of „Sprachwahl national – international“ (p. 28) – differs from a similar model proposed in Ammon 1991 by acknowledging the role of receptive multilingualism

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<sup>2</sup> In many discussions, at least within English-language discourses, it has shown itself useful to distinguish between ‘international’ (i.e. between nations or states themselves) and ‘transnational’ (between members of different nations). Since languages do not communicate, one should consider using the term ‘translingual’ (rather than ‘interlingual’) and its equivalents in other languages.

(Posner's (1991) „polyglotter Dialog“). Avoiding the misconception that use of a language as a *lingua franca* creates a new variety of that language, Ammon insists on the view that it is not a property of a language being used as a *lingua franca*, but that languages on occasion are used as a *lingua franca*, when they are used by speakers of different first languages. This interactional view of *lingua franca* use of a language is probably not only suitable for interactional microanalysis but also for statistical purposes, although there is a looming danger of treating vastly different scenarios as to proficiency, efficiency, precision and fluency under the same category. Ammon points at the enormous difficulties of collecting relevant and reliable data for a quantification of ‘internationality’ of a language (p. 30f.). This is later taken up in the discussion of de Swaan's proposal for a measure of the ‘internationality’ of a language (p. 66-74). Ammon does not consider reported language proficiency as basic reliable data for assessing the internationality of a language. De Swaan (2001) suggested a neat mathematical model that could predict what he calls the communication value (Q-value) of a language on the basis of the number of multilingual speakers vs. total number of competent speakers of a language. Apart from the fact that the model only tells us what we knew beforehand (viz. that English has a special status in today's global language regime), it is also based on intuitively plausible, but far from exact and reliable numerical data. Ammon suggests (pp. 29-33) to look at actual communicative acts instead, admitting that they may be even more elusive to observe and difficult to count.

An interesting issue is touched by the observation that in many countries like the Netherlands and Scandinavia, knowledge of the local language does not appear to be indispensable any more to many visitors, foreign students and businesspeople („die Kenntnis der örtlichen Sprache erübrigt sich“, p. 48). Ammon sees this situation approaching for German as well („Schon heute benötigen Ausländer in den deutschsprachigen Ländern in zahlreichen Situationen nicht mehr unbedingt Deutschkenntnisse“, p. 47). True, this apparent dispensability might often well be a delusion, but Ammon's own concept of choice of languages („Sprachwahl“, p. 51ff.) might create the analytic problems here. A tourist in a German-speaking country can either learn (and, in consequence, use) German or rely on the locals' proficiency in

other languages, often English. A reader can choose to read Grass' *Blechtrommel* in the original or in translation (if available). But there are situations, where there is no realistic language choice. A journalist can use German for interviewing people in a German-speaking country or rely on the German speakers' ability to answer questions in another language. But not learning and using German will come at a cost since it will limit the number, and bias the kind, of people that can be interviewed. A historian cannot sensibly choose to ignore documents and sources in German since in many cases relevant sources will not have been translated beforehand. In general, language choice is not an option if you want to access existing discourses. A foreign correspondent trying to stay 'in touch' with any ongoing debate (i.e. the existing discourses) will not be able to rely on a *lingua franca* or translations. For the accessibility of academic literature the issue is discussed on p. 693 (cf. also Haberland & Schulte, 2008). Thus not only a study of ongoing communicative acts (p. 31), but also an investigation of accessibility of discourses for outsiders is a research desideratum. This first chapter ends with a concise historical outline of the status of German in the world in terms of areal distribution of first language speakers and teaching as a foreign language and an ultra brief report on prognoses and speculations about the future of German.

The second chapter provides a delineation of what constitutes 'German' and what does not (as well as addressing the elusive idea of a 'German' ethnic group), while the third chapter outlines the demography and economic strength of German-speaking populations, also in comparison to that of other languages. The fourth and fifth chapters do not deal so much with numbers but rather with the status of German. Chapter 4 provides discussions of the status of German first in the countries where it is the official language (Germany, Austria, and Liechtenstein), where it has status as a joint official language (Switzerland and Luxemburg), and finally, where it has official recognition regionally as in Belgium and Italy. The fifth chapter covers German in those countries where it is spoken as a minority language but does not have official status as an *Amtssprache*.

Chapter 6 deals with areas of use; the sixth chapter with transnational business both in Germany and abroad (with in part detailed, in part summary accounts of the situation in 22 countries on all



continents). A point of interest is Ammon's admittedly speculative explanation of the preference for Düsseldorf over London for Japanese businesses: where English is used as a *lingua franca* rather than the local language, the European partners cannot gain from a *Muttersprachvorteil* ('first language advantage') any more (pp. 502-504).

The seventh chapter deals with German as international language of research and higher education with a strong historical perspective and a balanced discussion of a potential *Ausbaurückstand* ('Ausbau' of German). The eighth chapter deals with German in international communication in the strict sense between states (i.e. diplomacy) and its use within the institutions of the European Union (this chapter ends with a historical sketch about German in international treaties). This is followed by two chapters on German in transnational tourism and the appearance of German in the media outside the German language area with a few remarks on the verbal arts and vocal music. Finally, the last two chapters of the book deal with the teaching of German as a foreign and second language outside German speaking countries, and the promotion of German by the governments of German-speaking countries.

In linguistics as well as elsewhere, discussion of ecological issues is rarely disinterested or merely descriptive. Already in his 1991 book, Ammon was aware that an interest in the globally ecology of German could raise suspicions of a yearning for restoration of the status of a 'world language' which German never had. It is possibly no accident that the idea of an intimate tie between language and nation first was formulated by German-speaking scholars like Johann G. Herder, Wilhelm von Humboldt and Jacob Grimm (Herder lived in Riga, where German was a minority language). At that time, a German political nation did not exist yet, and the relationship between the speakers of German and their nation or nations, has always been troubled, to say it mildly. But the very fact of a language attaining international status at all (not all languages can boast such a status) weakens the supposed tie between nation and language as mutually constitutive:

„Der hohe Wert, den manche Sprachgemeinschaften einer starken internationalen Stellung ihrer Sprache zumessen, erklärt sich vermutlich z.T. auch aus der traditionellen begrifflichen Verflechtung von ‚Sprache‘ und ‚Nation‘ im europäischen Denken, vor allem seit der Romantik [...], und solche Ideen wurden von Europa aus weltweit verbreitet. In der Vorstellung Johann G. Herders, Jacob Grimms und anderer ist eine spezifische Sprache unlösbarer Bestandteil einer Nation. ... Daß die Sprache durch ihre Internationalität ihre spezifische Zuordnung zu der betreffenden Nation oder einer Sprachgemeinschaft teilweise einbüßt, wird dabei wohl nicht als sonderlich störend empfunden.“ (Ammon, 1991, p. 2)

Ammon does not seem to be concerned too much about an identity threat to German speakers as a consequence of the changing role of their first language in a changing world-wide language regime.

The book is an extremely useful, painstakingly compiled and admirably updated<sup>3</sup> repertory of information on the global language regime of German, and Ammon makes sure to take an ecological perspective, treating German not in splendid isolation which it never enjoyed, but in its interplay with other languages. Still, sometimes the reader gets the feeling that Ammon treats German as an at least partially lost cause and that its international status maybe is not shrinking but at least weakening, as also indicated by his qualification of the *Erster Bericht zur Lage der deutschen Sprache* (*Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung und Union der deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften ed., 2013*), which focuses on the vitality and resourcefulness of the German language, and similar voices as soothing (besänftigend) and sedative (Beruhigungspille) (p. 104). The very fact that several discourses of not only local but also in a transnational and global relevance largely only are accessible in German already proves the argument wrong that one occasionally hears, viz. that any language user actually only needs two

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<sup>3</sup> To the extent this is at all possible in an area where change seems to be the only thing one can count on. On p. 471, Ammon quotes a 2003 publication on measures taken at Danish universities in the mid-1990s to meet the need for German in Danish business communication. Since then, not only German programs, but practically all foreign language studies (in one case even English) in Danish universities have been curtailed or wound up.

languages – a world language and ‘their own’. The argument can take different forms and can be motivated in different ways. David Crystal makes the point that ‘the’ world language (for him English, that is) happily can co-exists with local languages: “a bilingualism where one of the languages within a speaker is the global language, providing access to the world community, and the other is a well-resourced regional language, providing access to a local community. (Crystal, 2003, p. 22; quoted critically on p. 11 in the book under review). The Catalan sociolinguist Lluís V. Aracil suggests the irrelevance of intermediate languages (like Spanish), termed by him as «les *interlinguas* dels imperis parroquials», when everybody knows two languages, their own and an ‘interlanguage’ common to all: «Perquè tothom pugui comunicar-se amb tothom, n’hi ha prou que cadascú sàpiga només dos idiomes: el seu proi i una *interlingua* comuna a tots» (Aracil, 1982, p. 37). Similar arguments can be heard in Denmark against the need of other foreign languages than English (identifying the use of English with a ‘global mindset’, Lønsmann 2015) or by Andrea Chiti-Batelli – in spite of calling *plurilinguisme en masse* an *absurdité* – arguing that a language by all (according to him, Esperanto) makes all languages superfluous apart from people’s own language (1993). If one took these suggestions seriously, one would seal all local discourses against being accessible from the outside (this also applies to the increasing linguistic diversity of web pages, cf. p. 900). The argument that this barrier will fall with the development of better automatic translation software does not necessarily hold water since even today this software is best used by people with some knowledge of the languages in question.

If this idea not only caught on ideologically, but also determined practice in language education and acquisition, no language except for whatever the ‘world language’ turns out to be would need any international status. As long as linguistic diversity is upheld also in transnational encounters there will be need of stock-taking for all the languages of any size in the global language regime. Books like Ammon’s (equivalents of which we would wish were written for many more languages) are indispensable for an understanding of this language regime.

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Esther H. Schor. *Bridge of words: Esperanto and the dream of a universal language*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2016. 364 pp.

## Reviewed by Federico Gobbo

In recent years, three books were published that deal with international auxiliary languages in general and Esperanto in particular. Garvía (2015) illustrates the history of the Esperanto Movement vis-à-vis its rivals while Gordin (2015) explains the role of Esperanto and Ido in trying to overcome language barriers between scientists in the early days of the past century. The book by Schor reviewed here is different. The author is a prominent contemporary American Jewish writer and a colleague of Gordin's at Princeton, and her books are regularly reviewed in several influential American publications, such as *The New York Times Book Review*. 2017 is the Year of Zamenhof, so this book gives a lot of visibility to Esperanto in the English-speaking world – I have counted 12 reviews available on the web, but it is likely that there are more. However, academic reviews are rare – one exception being Alcalde (2017). In the words of the author, this book “is a hybrid, history and memoir” (p. 316). Initially, it is focused only on Zamenhof, the founder, on the model of her previous book *Emma Lazarus*. However, the vibrant life of Esperanto speakers and the experience in which the author has engaged by virtue of her contact with them in the last seven years transformed the original plan, and it becomes a journey in Esperanto Land, an admixture of a travel book and an anthropological report of a field work. It is more challenging to review compared to the works by Garvía's and Gordin's on similar topics. Unlike those, Schor's work is not a purely academic and scholarly work, even though the quantity and quality of the notes supporting the arguments is impressive. So, the book can be read like a novel. Moreover, Schor's language style is a real pleasure for the reader. Nevertheless, my task here is to review it from the point of view of a scholar in the field of interlinguistics and Esperanto studies.

First, the title is partially misleading: there is almost no trace of the rivals of Esperanto or the philosophical languages that were a very important step in the history of the pursuit of a universal language. That story is recounted in the Umberto Eco's now classic study on the topic (1993), translated in English in 1996 and in many other languages including Esperanto. The history of Esperanto is told

through the biographies of leading figures, starting from Zamenhof. The founder of Esperanto is presented in great detail with special attention given to his Jewishness and his religious-political project, Homaranismo. Then, the author chooses historically important figures like Hector Hodler, Inazo Nitobe, Ernest Drezen, Eŭgeno Lanti, Lidia Zamenhof, Vasili Eroshenko, Hasegawa Teru, Ivo Lapenna, whose names are familiar only to specialists. Many living Esperantists met in her journeys are depicted here and there by Schor, including several noteworthy ones like Humphrey Tonkin and Renato Corsetti or the younger Peter Baláž and Chuck Smith. The portraits of the living Esperantists can be sometimes disturbing, and the general impression to the uninitiated reader may be that Esperanto attracts mainly (or only) eccentrics. Another issue is that the book seems to be directed only at American readers. As a result, the space devoted to the Esperanto Movement in the US is considerable, even though Esperanto has a much larger following in other countries such as Brazil and France. This is true, for example, when Schor tells of her visit to Hanoi. There are almost no Esperanto experiences in that account, and, therefore, it is an unnecessary detour, of interest only for American readers because of the war in Vietnam. To compensate for that, one of the most interesting parts of the book is the chapter devoted to her visit in *Bona Espero*, a place in Brazil for the education of orphans and children, who “come from fractured, improvised families” (p. 290). This orphanage is headed by a couple of Esperantists, Giuseppe and Ursula Grattapaglia. The author based her narrative also on information originally published in Esperanto by Dobrzyński (2008), for the first time available in English.

From a formal point of view, there was a major drawback in the book: no proof-reading was done by a fluent Esperanto speaker (Schor certainly has a good command of the language, but she admits to not being fluent). Odd expressions or errors in Esperanto are excessive for such an excellent book. Here are some selected examples: *tiusense*, p. 31 should be *tiusence*; *solena malfermito* should be *solena malfermo*, p. 113. In particular, there are two keywords used incorrectly throughout the entire book. The first one is the almost ungrammatical *finavenkismo* (instead of the normally used *finvenkismo*, meaning more or less “the traditional ideology of spreading Esperanto as a second language throughout all the

globe,” its English translation “great battle” at p. 89 is inappropriate). The second word is *judadivena* (instead of *juddevena*, meaning “of Jewish origin”). Sometimes errors produce funny results for an Esperanto speaker: *kaco* (“cock,” from the Italian *cazzo*) is misspelled in *kaĉo* (which means “gruel,” see p. 204). In some points the flexibility and liveliness of the language is taken into account, such as in the difficulties reported in translating *ŝafeco*: “it’s one of those Esperantisms that doesn’t carry well into English. They follow like sheep, he’s trying to say, they suffer from... sheepishness. Sheephood? Sheepiness? Sheepity?” (p. 235). Unfortunately, these observations are rare. Occasionally, judgments are too blunt and not supported by extensive sociolinguistic research, for example, *malsanulejo* (p. 29) for “hospital” is far from being an archaism as stated by the author, but on the contrary it is a commonly used word as a synonym of *hospitalo*.

Despite the fact that there is much information available, there is no clear account of who Esperantists are. For example, the poem *La Espero* is called the “anthem for his [Zamenhof’s] para-nation” (p. 198), *Esperantujo* (i.e., “Esperanto Land”) is called elsewhere a “para-people,” while the quoted word *mugloj* (from Hogwarts’ English slang “muggles”) for “non-Esperantists” should have been marked clearly as jocular and ironic. Schor defines Esperantists as “meta-Jews” and herself in the initial pages of the book as “an American in self-imposed exile in London” but then as a “meta-Esperantist Jew.” The author should have developed these important points in far greater detail, in order to enter a debate about the Esperanto identity which has lasted since at least 1905.

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