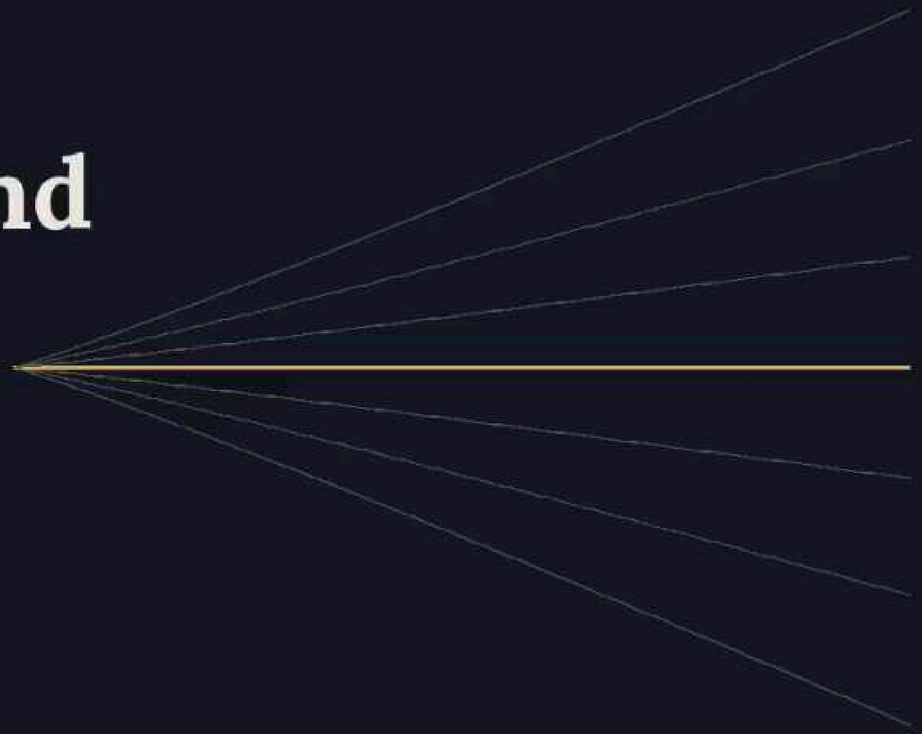
ANDERSON ACADEMY

ESPR 101 B · Introduction to Esperanto (Brief course)

Lecture 1 · about 8 min

History, Ideals, Alphabet, and Pronunciation



A library of university-level courses

Questions or feedback: garyanderson@mail.grokbot.com · @garyanderson

Three questions

- Why create a language?
- How did it spread?
- How is it written and spoken?

¶ 1.1

And how is Esperanto written and pronounced?

Zamenhof's city

- Born 1859 in Bialystok
- Poles, Russians, Germans, Jews
- Many languages, much distrust
- Dream of a neutral language

¶ 1.2

As a boy, Zamenhof came to believe that a shared neutral language could reduce such hostility.

The beginning

- **1859** Zamenhof born
- **1887** the Unua Libro in Warsaw
- **1888** more books and editions
- **Soon** the name Esperanto sticks

¶ 1.3

Esperantists call this first book the Unua Libro, the First Book.

A gift to the world

- No personal ownership
- Sixteen grammar rules
- Basic vocabulary and texts
- A pledge to learn

¶ 1.4

including a translation of the Lord's Prayer.

Roots and grammar

Vocabulary

- Mostly European
- Latin, Romance, Germanic, Slavic

Grammar

- Unchanging parts glued together
- Resembles agglutinative languages

¶ 1.5

resembles in some ways languages such as Turkish or Chinese more than the Indo-European languages from which the roots came.

The Fundamento

- First World Congress, 1905
- Boulogne-sur-Mer, France
- Grammar, exercises, dictionary
- A fixed foundation

¶ 1.6

There the delegates accepted the Fundamento de Esperanto, a book of grammar, exercises, and a universal dictionary,

Declaration of Boulogne

- An Esperantist: anyone who uses it
- For any purpose
- Zamenhof's private ideals kept separate
- The language is neutral

¶ 1.7

Zamenhof also held private religious and ethical ideals, which he called homaranismo, but he insisted they were his own.

Persecution

- Distrust from nationalists
- Banned in Nazi Germany
- Zamenhof's children killed
- Esperantists purged under Stalin

¶ 1.8

In the Soviet Union, many Esperantists were arrested or shot in Stalin's purges of 1937 and 1938. Yet the language survived.

After the war

Recognition

- UNESCO resolution, 1954
- UNESCO resolution, 1985

Numbers

- Speakers hard to count
- Estimates vary widely

¶ 1.9

How many people speak Esperanto today is uncertain:

The alphabet

- Twenty-eight letters
- One letter, one sound
- No q, w, x, or y
- Six letters with marks: ĉ ĝ ĥ ĵ ŝ ŭ

¶ 1.10

and u with a breve, a small curved mark.

The vowels

Letter	Sound
a	as in father
e	as in bet
i	as in machine
o	as in more
u	as in rule

¶ 1.11

U is as in rule.

Consonants to watch

Letter	Sound
c	ts, as in cats
g	hard, as in go
j	y, as in yes
r	tapped or rolled

¶ 1.12

J sounds like the y in yes.

Letters with a hat, 1

Letter	Sound
ĉ	ch: ĉiu
ĝ	j: ĝojo
ŝ	sh: ŝipo
ĵ	zh: ĵurnalo

¶ 1.13

S with a hat, ŝ, is sh as in ship: ŝipo, ship.

Letters ĥ and ŭ

Letter	Example
ĥ	aŭto, car
ŭ	kh, as in loch
ĥoro, choir	w, as in cow

¶ 1.14

U with a breve, ŭ, is a short w sound, used almost only after a or e: aŭ,

Glides

Spelling	Like English
aj	eye
oj	boy
ej	day
aŭ	cow

¶ 1.15

Aŭ sounds like ow, and eŭ like eh followed by w.

Common pitfalls

- Every vowel is its own syllable
- familio: fa-mi-li-o
- Clear, short o at the end
- Listen to fluent speakers

¶ 1.16

And the final o of a noun should be a clear, short o,

Stress

- Always the second-to-last syllable
- es-pe-RAN-to
- fa-mi-LI-o
- Count vowels from the end

¶ 1.17

Each vowel makes one syllable, so you can always find the stress by counting vowels from the end.

Letter names

- Consonant plus o: bo, co, ĉo
- Vowels by their sound
- UEA said u-o-a
- Easy dictation

¶ 1.18

Spelling words aloud this way makes Esperanto dictation easy,

Typing the special letters

Zamenhof's h-system

- Letter plus h
- ch for ĉ

Modern x-system

- Letter plus x
- cx for ĉ

¶ 1.19

because x is not part of the Esperanto alphabet and so cannot be confused.

Why the marks matter

Word	Meaning
ŝi	she
si	oneself
ĉe	at

¶ 1.20

A word written with the wrong letter can change meaning: ĉe means at,

First words

Esperanto	English
Saluton	Hello
Dankon	Thank you
Ĝis revido	Goodbye

¶ 1.21

Then read the alphabet aloud, letter by letter.