

# A Lesson About Esperanto



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# How to introduce Esperanto at school in one lesson

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## 1. Introduction

Esperanto is a constructed language that is not usually taught at schools. The advantages and possibilities that Esperanto offers for international communication are therefore not known to most people. This gap can be closed by means of

### **"A Lesson About Esperanto".**

Every student in Europe (and the whole world) should learn something about Esperanto as part of his/her education, at least one lesson. With about 10,000 instructional hours at school in 10 years, this ought to be possible. It could be integrated into foreign language training, maybe with a native language newspaper article on Esperanto as a starting point (see e.g. [www.esperantoland.org/de/raportoj.html](http://www.esperantoland.org/de/raportoj.html)). However, it could also be part of a history, politics, civics or social studies class. And an introduction to Esperanto has been used successfully for emergency cover lessons.

The introductory lesson is meant to teach about the language itself as well as its uses. It is ideally suited for students aged 10 to 16 years; with minor changes other age groups can be addressed as well, of course.

Naturally, a single lesson can only provide a first contact with the international language Esperanto. Introducing this one lesson into a large number of schools, though, will lead to an integration of knowledge about Esperanto into our canon of general education. This can be continued in workgroups, afternoon clubs or projects. Speakers of Esperanto can be invited as experts (via the local Esperanto group, see [www.esperanto.org](http://www.esperanto.org)).

The teacher (or possibly a student, under supervision) is free to use the material provided here in the way he/she thinks. After all, he or she is responsible for structuring and carrying out the lesson. Two possible texts are enclosed ("Bonan matenon" and "What is Esperanto?"), plus two lesson outlines. Readers are asked to send in suggestions for further improvement of this concept.

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## 2. The rationale behind this proposal

The following ideas especially guided me:

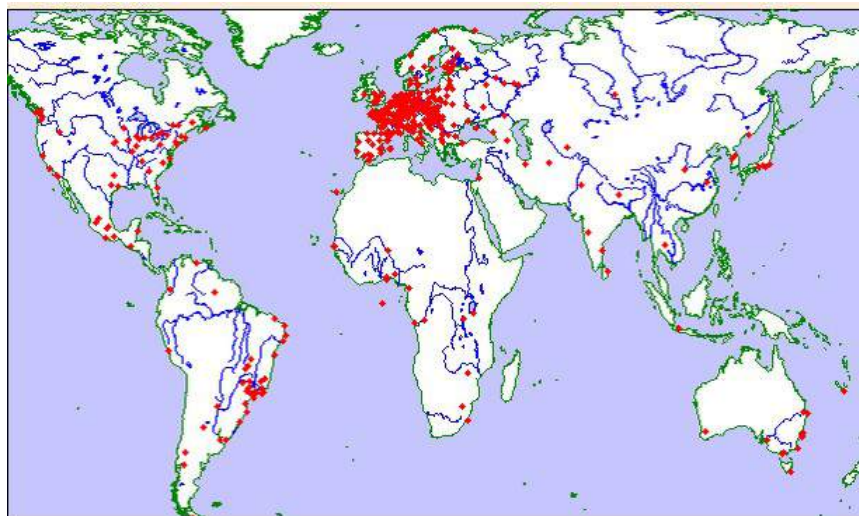
1. Esperanto is easy to learn. In the same amount of time you achieve a higher level of performance than in other foreign languages. Esperanto has a regular structure, which means that students can continue on their own easily. Good students only need two or three weekend workshops (30-50 school periods) to be able to participate meaningfully in international meetings.
2. Learning Esperanto makes learning other languages easier. This results from the easy recognition of sentence parts in Esperanto (nouns end in -o, adjectives in -a, verb conjugations in -as/is/os/us).
3. The language can be practiced easily in a large number of countries, because Esperanto meetings are held in dozens of countries. It is also used on the internet and on Facebook.
4. Asking for a one-lesson introduction to one language can be applied to other languages as well, of course, especially the languages of minorities and immigrants in the country. It also applies to the language of neighboring countries.

With Esperanto, though, everybody is challenged on the same level. Inevitably, this has a positive effect on the shared feeling of all people living in a heterogeneous society.

5. Even teachers with little knowledge of Esperanto can prepare an introductory lesson within relatively short time. There is enough useful material at hand.
6. Esperanto furthers international communication on a neutral basis.

## 3. How to continue after the first lesson

Introductory lessons to Esperanto open up interesting possibilities for the school profile. The concept can be extended in many directions. Many short courses are available online as brochures, worksheets or interactive download packages. Contacts with other schools that teach Esperanto are possible. Wouldn't it be delightful if new international understanding developed from this?



Esperanto groups worldwide

source: taken from <http://www.esperantoland.org/gruppen/mapo.php?mapo=13&lingvo=de>

## 4. Description of two lesson outlines

### a) Outline 1

#### Introduction (ca 5 min)

Teacher greets the class, saying "Bonan matenon!" ("Good morning!") or "Bonan tagon!" ("Good day!"/"Hello!") - waiting for a response in the same way. Students' possible knowledge of parts of the greeting is referred to, then the word Esperanto is written on the board in large letters. A short explanation follows.

#### Text work (ca 15 min)

The text 'Bonan matenon!' is distributed and students are given the assignment. In some situations it might be necessary to concentrate on one part of the material only. It is also possible to use different modes of classroom work (in groups, alone or teacher's presentation).

#### Gaining practice (ca 10 min)

Two students stand in front of the class and introduce themselves to each other in Esperanto, using language material from the text. Maybe more groups repeat the presentation. The teacher comments and helps with pronunciation and grammar.

#### Securing results (ca 10 min)

Students write some of the newly learned words and phrases on the board, others read them out loud and translate them.

#### Conclusion (ca 5 min)

The teacher summarizes briefly and emphasizes that this was just a first contact with the international language Esperanto. More information material is handed out (e. g. the text "What is Esperanto?").

### b) Outline 2

If the teacher has at least some knowledge of Esperanto herself/himself a radically different approach is possible. The lesson can be conducted almost entirely in Esperanto, starting with "Ni nun lernas novan lingvon." ("Now we learn a new language.") This itself will fascinate many students and open their minds. If this was a little too difficult for some of the students, the following sentence will help them to feel ground under their feet, "Mia nomo estas [Smith], kaj via nomo estas ...?" ("My name is [Smith], and your name is ...?") It will not take long before one student answers, "Mia nomo estas Peter." ("My name is Peter.") The student is rewarded by saying, "Dankon, Peter! Ĉu vi havas najbaron?" ("Thank you, Peter, do you have a neighbor?") Using gestures always helps with understanding.

Gradually small sentences are written on the board so that everybody can guess the meaning more easily. And soon everybody in the first row will say what his/her neighbor's name is: "Mia najbaro estas Ben." ("My neighbor is Ben.") Quickly the feminine form "najbarino" is introduced. Other short sentences follow, and soon the lesson is over.

## 5. Text: 'Bonan matenon!'

**Bonan matenon! Bonan tagon! Bonan vesperon! Saluton!**

Kiu vi estas?	Mi estas Tesi.
El kiu lando vi venas?	Mi venas el Grekio.
En kiu urbo vi loĝas?	Mi loĝas en Ateno.
Kiu estas via profesio?	Mi estas lernanto.
En kiu klaso vi estas?	Mi estas en la sepa klaso.
Ĉu vi havas hejmbestojn? *	Ne, mi ne havas hejmbestojn.
Kiom da jaroj vi havas?	Mi havas dek kvar jarojn.
Ĉu vi havas gefratojn? *	Jes, mi havas unu fraton kaj du fratinojn.

\* *Yes-No-Questions in Esperanto begin with 'ĉu'.*

1	unu	- landoj -	- urboj -	- profesioj -	- bestoj -
2	du				
3	tri	Germanio	Berlino	laboristo	urso
4	kvar	Danlando	Kopenhago	dentisto	bovo
5	kvin	Japanio	Tokio	ĝardenisto	fîŝo
6	ses	Senegalo	Dakaro	politikisto	leono
7	sep	Pollando	Varsovio	instruisto	ĉevalo
8	ok	Britio	Londono	fîŝisto	leporo
9	naŭ	Turkio	Ankarao	kuracisto	ŝafo
10	dek	Francio	Parizo	kondukisto	koko
11	dek unu	Pakistano	Islamabado	maristo	tigro
20	du dek	Belgio	Bruselo	biciklisto	muso
30	tri dek	Aŭstrio	Vieno	bakisto	aglo
100	cent	Rusio	Moskvo	tajloro	lupo

- p a r e n c o j -			<b>Ĝis revido!</b>  <b>Ĝis baldaŭ!<sup>12</sup></b>
	av(in)o		
bopatr(in)o	patr(in)o	onkl(in)o	
edz(in)o	frat(in)o	kuz(in)o	
bofil(in)o	fil(in)o	nev(in)o	
	nep(in)o		

source: in part taken from the Esperanto primer "Tesi, la testudo", EsperantoLand, Berlin, 2006, p. 97 and others

### Pronunciation in Esperanto:

The vowels i and u are closed, e and o are half open, a is open – as in machine, rude, bet, fork, spa.  
Vowels are of medium length - in stressed syllables sometimes longer.

c tsar    ĉ chisel    ĝ jungle    ĵ measure    ŝ ship    ĥ loch

v very    s sit    z zone    r as in Italian, always distinctly pronounced

ŭ is merged with the preceding vowel (e.g. a) to form a diphthong: aŭ as in luau.

Esperanto is purely phonetic. Every word is always pronounced in the same way. There are no silent letters. Words of more than one syllable have their stress on the next-to-last syllable.

## 6. Vocabulary for "Bonan matenon"

**Good morning! Good Day! Good evening! Hello!**

Who are you?	I am Tesi.
What country are you from?	I am from Greece.
In what city do you live?	I live in Athens.
What is your occupation?	I am a student.
What grade are you in?	I am in grade 7.
Do you have pets?	No, I don't have pets.
How old are you?	I am 14 years old.
Do you have brothers or sisters?	Yes, I have a brother and two sisters.

1	one	- countries -	- cities -	- occupations -	- animals -
2	two				
3	three			worker	bear
4	four			dentist	cattle
5	five			gardener	fish
6	six			politician	lion
7	seven			teacher	horse
8	eight			fisherman	hare
9	nine			doctor	sheep
10	ten			trucker	chicken
11	eleven			sailor	tiger
20	twenty			cyclist	mouse
30	thirty			baker	eagle
100	one hundred			taylor	wolf

- r e l a t i v e s -			<b>Good bye!</b>  <b>See you soon!</b>
	grandfather/ grandmother		
brother-in-law/ sister-in-law	father/mother	uncle/aunt	
husband/wife	brother/sister	cousin	
son-in-law/ daughter-in-law	son/daughter	nephew/niece	
	grandson/ granddaughter		

## 7. Text: What is Esperanto?

Esperanto is the international language that was created by Dr. Ludwik Zamenhof and first published by him in 1887 as "LINGVO INTERNACIA". Its vocabulary is mainly based on international root words, especially of Romance origin (like French and Latin) and Germanic origin (like English and German). Many Esperanto words can be found in several languages (e. g. *fenestro*: German *Fenster*, French *fenêtre*, Italian *finestra*).

A large number of Esperanto words is related to common words of everyday usage: *ekologio* - ecology, *foto* - photo, *kompleta* - complete, *lerni* - to learn, *rapida* - rapid, *tipa* - typical.

Esperanto grammar is really manageable: there are just 16 fixed rules and a sophisticated system of prefixes and suffixes.

How **conjugations** work:

<b>vidi</b>	– to see		
<b>mi vidas</b>	– I see / I am seeing	<b>vi vidas</b>	– you see/are seeing
<b>mi vidis</b>	– I saw / have seen	<b>vi vidis</b>	– you saw / have seen
<b>mi vidos</b>	– I will see	<b>vi vidos</b>	– you will see
<b>mi vidus</b>	– I would see	<b>vi vidus</b>	– you would see

How **declinations** work: only plurals and accusatives have an ending, the rest is indicated by means of prepositions:

<b>tablo</b>	– table		
<b>la tablo</b>	– the table	<b>la tabloj</b>	– the tables
<b>Mi vidas la tablon</b>	– I see the table.	<b>Mi vidas la tablojn</b>	– I see the tables.
<b>Mi donas al vi la skribilon.</b>	–	<b>I give you the pen.</b>	

How **suffixes** are used:

<b>vivi</b>	– to live	<b>vivo</b>	– life	<b>viva</b>	– alive
<b>pezi</b>	– to weigh	<b>pezo</b>	– weight	<b>peza</b>	– heavy
<b>fumi</b>	– to smoke	<b>fumo</b>	– smoke	<b>fuma</b>	– smoky
<b>sana</b>	– healthy	<b>sanulo</b>	– healthy person	<b>malsana</b>	– ill
<b>sanigi</b>	– to heal	<b>sanigebla</b>	– curable	<b>malsanulejo</b>	– hospital

Such a **modular system** also stimulates a creative use of language. In Esperanto you can formulate complex matters with precision - because of its **clear structure**.

Esperanto is easy to learn and neutral, which makes it an ideal **medium of international communication**. The national languages are not to be replaced but complemented.

## **8. Information about Esperanto: The international language**

The international language Esperanto is being used in more than one hundred countries all over the world as a second language. Ever since its publication by Ludwik Zamenhof in Warsaw in 1887 as a constructed language it has developed into a living language by steady use within more than a century.

### **Steady growth**

More and more songs are sung in Esperanto, the internet is especially attractive to its use, Esperanto couples often decide to bring up their children speaking Esperanto with them.

### **International Esperanto meetings**

Every year hundreds of international meetings of all sizes take place. Speakers of Esperanto visit their friends in all parts of the world and get to know other cultures. Meetings of young people often have participants coming from more than twenty countries. Esperanto is a tool that helps explore the world.

### **Culture**

There is a large Esperanto literature of fictional and non-fictional books, either translated from other languages or written directly in this bridge language. Around 120 new titles are published every year. There are more than 100 periodicals. Bands use Esperanto to have access to an international audience. Plays deal with the lives of the international community of Esperanto users.

### **Internet**

Many million pages in Esperanto can be accessed on the internet, with a steady increase of audio and video files (look up at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)). The wikipedia in Esperanto has over 200,000 articles, more than 1000 are added every month, which means that it ranks as no 33 among all wikipedia versions (as of 2014). Daily news in Esperanto can be found on the Chinese website [esperanto.china.org.cn](http://esperanto.china.org.cn).

### **Easy to learn**

With its international vocabulary and regular grammar Esperanto can be learned much more easily than other languages. Two or three weekend workshops usually enable participants to enter into a conversation and to find friends from different countries at international meetings. Since Esperanto is so easy to learn, many of its speakers reach a level almost comparable to that of a native speaker.

### **Weblinks**

[EsperantoLand.org](http://EsperantoLand.org)

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## **Esperanto - the linguistic handshake**