

Esperantic Studies Foundation President's Report 2007

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The year 2007 was a successful and largely positive year for the Esperantic Studies Foundation. As in the previous year, the Foundation was able both to continue existing projects and to initiate a variety of new projects, as well as to provide funding support to others that were deemed to meet the Foundation's strategic priorities. The board met regularly by telephone throughout the year, and in October it met in person in Vancouver in connection with the Phi Delta Kappa Summit on Global Education. This meeting provided an opportunity for updating the Medium Term Plan and dealing with a number of important strategic items.

The broad objects of the Foundation continue to include focus on: (1) improving the visibility and prestige of Esperanto as a research topic and teaching subject, (2) focusing attention and academic resources on the study of Esperanto and of interlingual communication generally, (3) establishing an intellectual community of teachers and researchers in higher education committed to the above goals, and (4) improving and expanding the operational capacity of the foundation itself.

ESF's 2006 report laid out the following goals for 2007.

1. Increase the visibility of ESF among North American scholars. While ESF board members were able to participate in a number of conferences during the year, and while there were some new contacts established, ESF's visibility remains relatively low. This remains a priority item.

2. Move forward on the Nitobe process, and creating a centre as planned (either a physical centre or a web-based 'virtual' centre), based in part on discussions to take place in Japan this summer. The Nitobe Symposium in Tokyo in August was a major success (see below), and conversations are currently proceeding about a further symposium in Poland in 2009. Views on the desirability of establishing a virtual center, however, are shifting as it becomes clear that a rather more modest website should be established before proceeding to anything more ambitious.

3. Proceed with numerous in-process book projects. The second in the series *Studies in World Language Problems* has appeared from Benjamins (Amsterdam), under the auspices of the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems (CED) and with modest support from ESF. An initial report from the Nitobe Symposium in Tokyo, *Towards Equitable Language Policy in Asia* (ed. Kimura Goro Christoph), has appeared, published by the European Institute, Sophia University. A volume of proceedings from the conference "The Translator as Mediator between Cultures" is in preparation, edited by Humphrey Tonkin, Maria Esposito Frank, and Marcia Moen. ESF also supported the publication of Dr. Wim Jansen's University of Amsterdam dissertation

on word-order in Esperanto and Mr. Andreas Künzli's encyclopedia on universal languages in Switzerland.

4. Thoroughly update the ESF website. This project was entrusted to the Lernu.net team (see below) and it is expected that it will be completed in late 2008.

5. Revisit medium-term plans for each Board member. This formed part of the Vancouver meeting in October and is now regarded as an ongoing process.

6. Seek a resolution to the challenge of creating a significant North American university-based Esperanto and interlinguistics research library, especially with respect to dealing with donations of appropriate collections of Esperanto materials. Conversations have been launched with Simon Fraser University, in Vancouver, and are currently ongoing.

7. Address the operational needs of ESF in a more efficient and effective manner. The year has seen considerable progress (see below), but the effort is continuing.

8. Continue to review and address the financial base for ESF. It was decided in Vancouver in October that ESF should launch an effort to augment its present endowment. This led in early 2008 to a day-long meeting in New York with a fundraising consultant and a decision to proceed further with this effort.

The projects and activities identified below indicate that we are making significant progress on achieving these goals, but more remains to be done.

The projects and activities identified below are each tied to the relevant section of the ESF Medium-Term Plan, 2007-2010, as approved by the ESF Board in November 2006.

PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

EDUCATION

lernu! (www.lernu.net)

The free, web-based, language-learning environment “lernu!” continued to receive support in 2007-2008. ESF funds were used not only to continue to support “lernu!,” but also to offer a version of the course as a university-level elective in Europe (at the University of Uppsala). The Lernu.net technology development team also received funding for the development of an Esperanto Grammar Checking Program. Lernu! is an example of an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.4.

edukado.net (www.edukado.net)

The teaching support site “edukado” received support in 2006-2007 to help with the continued expansion of its teaching materials as well as the development of a web-based

interface that now enables subject matter experts to easily edit and upload content from anywhere in the world. Edukado is an example of an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.4.

NASK (North American Esperanto Institute) (www.esperanto.org/nask)

ESF has been supporting this unique 3-week immersion program since 1998 and it has become a core educational priority for the foundation. NASK's 2007 session took place in July in San Diego, California (at the University of California San Diego) – a return to the West Coast after several years of operation in Brattleboro, Vermont. Favorable conditions at the University of California San Diego, including the presence of ESF board member Grant Goodall, led to the decision to organize the 2007 session at this new location (July 9-27). The results in the first year were positive, and it was decided to continue with the same arrangement in 2008. The NASK program is another example of an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), with a specific North American focus, and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.4.

ACTFL Esperanto Guidelines

ESF has been actively involved in the development of proficiency guidelines for Esperanto as part of ACTFL's national foreign language proficiency guidelines project. The guidelines have been translated into Esperanto and are the subject of a scholarly article by Timothy Reagan and Bonnie Fonseca in a recent issue of the journal *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*. This project, which is again an educational project that supports the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), is explicitly identified in Objective 2.2, and has implications for Objective 2.3.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

Funding was provided for a translation of this major Council of Europe handbook into Esperanto – an activity within Strategic Area 2.

Interlinguistics Certificate Program

ESF continued to provide scholarship support in 2007 for students enrolled in the Interlinguistics certificate program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. This program will reach its tenth year of operation in 2008 and a symposium to mark the anniversary is currently being planned, with ESF support. Although the Interlinguistics Certificate Program is an educational project, and hence falls under Strategic Area 2 (Strategic Area 1), it also has clear implications for the building of an intellectual community (Strategic Area 3).

ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University) Esperanto Project

In 2006, ESF funded, on a one-year basis, a faculty position at ELTE, the leading university in Hungary, which has had a formal Esperanto program for many years. A site visit in March 2007 revealed a largely unsatisfactory situation at ELTE, not only for this program but also for the applied linguistics program in which it is housed. The decision to organize the following activity (see below), a conference of universities teaching

Esperanto and interlinguistics, was an indirect outcome of the discovery of the parlous situation of Esperanto at ELTE.

Conference of Universities Teaching Esperanto and Interlinguistics

ESF will underwrite the costs associated with a conference on this subject to be held in July 2008, hosted by the University of Amsterdam and organized by CED (the Center for Research and Documentation on World Language Problems). Objectives of the conference include the exchange of information and ideas, planning for the exchange of personnel, and cooperation in curriculum, libraries etc. This project supports both Strategic Area 2 (education) and Strategic Area 3 (scholarly community building).

Springboard to Languages Project

The Springboard to Languages Project is an effort to introduce Esperanto in selected primary schools in the UK as part of the country's new language policy. An important component of the project is the evaluation of students' language learning, with an emphasis on the propedeutic effects of Esperanto language study preceding French language study. ESF has provided initial funding to support the evaluation of this four-year project, and has also funded a further request for the next school year. Board member Timothy Reagan has paid two visits to the organizers and is providing the benefit of his expertise in the area. This is an educational project, and hence falls under Strategic Area 2, but it also relates to the building of research on the propedeutic value of the study of Esperanto.

GIL (Gesellschaft für Interlinguistik) Program (Leipzig)

Early in 2007, the ESF Board approved 9000 euros to support a teaching effort at the University of Leipzig aimed at the ultimate establishment of a program in interlinguistics and Esperanto studies, under the direction of Dr. Sabine Fiedler and the sponsorship of GIL. There may be possible links between this effort and those undertaken by the "lernu!" staff, and at the University of Poznan. The first, successful, phase of the project is now complete and a report has been filed. No decision has yet been made on next steps. This project is best seen as a combination of Strategic Area 1, Strategic Area 2, and Strategic Area 3.

Esperanto Teacher Training Program in Africa

In 2006 ESF allocated 2500 euros to support an Esperanto teacher training program in Africa, with the understanding that there would also be a final report, preferably of publishable quality. The program is proceeding and a report is awaited. This project deals primarily with the teaching and learning of Esperanto in Africa (Strategic Area 1), although it may also result in improvements with respect to building an intellectual community there (Strategic Area 3).

Documentary Film Project

In 2006 ESF agreed to provide limited funding to support a documentary film project on Esperanto produced by Sam Green, whose earlier documentary on the Weather Underground was nominated for an Academy Award. A second grant was recently awarded. Mr. Green and his team visited the 2006 World Congress in Florence and the

2007 Congress in Yokohama. This project is an excellent example of how public discourse with respect to Esperanto and interlingual communication can be encouraged and improved, and is thus a powerful example of an activity that falls under Strategic Area 1.

INTERLINGUAL RESEARCH

EPAK Project (Spoken Esperanto Project)

Phase I of the Spoken Esperanto Project (for the compilation of a spoken corpus of Esperanto) has been completed by Christer Lornemark, and funding for Phase II has now been approved and Phase II is proceeding. This project clearly falls under Strategic Area 1 (Scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication), and is further identified under Objective 1.5 in the Medium Term Plan.

Interlinguistics Support Fund

This fund was established, under the leadership of Detlev Blanke (Germany), to support small grants for publications, conferences, and similar activities. The sum of \$10,000 was approved for this fund and a further grant in a similar amount has been made for 2008. Proposals are reviewed and recommended by a three-person committee consisting of Dr. Blanke, Dr. Christer Kiselman (Sweden) and Mr. Osmo Buller (Netherlands). Among grants awarded was support for the Fajsz Collection at the National Foreign Language Library in Budapest. The Interlinguistics Support Fund was established as an alternative way of commissioning and supporting research (Strategic Area 1).

Nitobe Symposium

The 5th Nitobe Symposium took place in Tokyo in August, 2007. This symposium explored the linguistic dimensions of Asian integration and globalization, a further step in the ongoing Nitobe process. Hosted by the newly formed European Institute at Sophia University, the symposium was organized primarily by Kimura Goro Christoph, a professor in the Institute, and Usui Hiroyuki, of the Japanese Esperanto Institute, under the auspices of CED. Despite the fact that it was held during the universities' summer recess, it attracted a large number of Japanese scholars (well over a hundred), many of them leading figures in sociolinguistics and language policy. Scholars from outside the country included Richard Baldauf (Australia), Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (Denmark), Zegimaa Choidon (Mongolia), Robert Phillipson (Denmark), Feng Zhiwei (China), Joseph Errington (USA), E. Annamalai (India and USA), Probal Dasgupta (India), and Totok Suhardijanto (Indonesia). Also attending were ESF board members Mark Fettes, Timothy Reagan, and Humphrey Tonkin. As indicated above, an initial 217-page report has been published by Sophia University in three languages, and a book is in preparation. The symposium's final document offered a series of ten recommendations for further action. "The ascendancy of European languages, and the concomitant resources dedicated to them," it stated, "has taken place without democratic oversight and protection of the Asian languages and their speakers." A fourth Nitobe Symposium, supported by ESF, was organized in Bratislava, Slovakia, in November 2006, on "Perspectives of Language Policy and Language Rights in the EU," and the organization

of a sixth, in 2009, in Poznan, Poland, is under active consideration. ESF has been a supporter of the Nitobe process from its inception, and it clearly fits well with our overall mission. It is relevant with respect to the Medium Term Plan in terms of its implications for Strategic Area 1 (Scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication), as well as for Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

Research Grant Awards

(1) In 2007 the Foundation provided a postdoctoral fellowship in the amount of \$10,000 to the Center for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. This was its third award to the Center.

(2) Dr. Sho Konishi, of the University of Illinois, is continuing work on his project on “The Emergence of the Esperanto Movement in Japan: Interlingualism and the Vision of Cooperatist Anarchist Modernity,” funded by ESF at the end of 2005.

(3) Dr. Probal Dasgupta, of the Indian Statistical Institute, has been awarded a research grant primarily to support scholarly travel to Europe.

Conferences

(1) ESF organized a panel at the Phi Delta Kappa Summit on Global Education, in which several board members participated.

(2) ESF continues to fund an award presented at the annual conference of CALICO (Computer-Assisted Language Instruction).

(3) Funding was also provided to support a symposium organized by former board member Dr. E. James Lieberman at the 2008 conference of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in February 2008 in Boston. The symposium addressed linguistic inequality in the scientific community and featured three speakers: Dr. Jose Antonio Vergara (Chile), Dr. Ulrich Ammon (Germany) and Dr. Humphrey Tonkin (USA). The symposium caused a considerable stir among scientists who had hitherto failed to recognize such language discrimination in their ranks, and reports appeared in newspapers across the world, including *Die Welt* in Germany and newspapers in Belgium and Pakistan. The US periodical *The Scientist* ran an editorial on the subject stimulated by the symposium.

These activities can be identified with Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

The Folger Library

In November 2007, a three-person delegation (E. James Lieberman, David Gaines, Humphrey Tonkin) presented a complete set of Shakespeare translations in Esperanto (some twenty in all), purchased with funding from ESF, to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC. This activity is part of Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

Translation Conference

ESF co-sponsored a conference on “The Translator as Mediator of Culture” at the University of Hartford in November 2006. As noted above, the proceedings of the

conference are now being prepared for publication. This activity is part of Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

Book Projects

There are a number of ESF-related book projects currently underway. See above. The Foundation also continues to support publication of the hardcopy version of the *Informilo por Interlingvistoj*, published by CED under the editorship of Detlev Blanke (a web version appears on the ESF webpages). The publication activities of ESF are concerned primarily with Objective 1.4, although they are also relevant with respect to the overall concerns of Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community).

OPERATIONS

The Executive Director Position

In December 2006, Timothy Reagan replaced Mark Fettes in the position of Executive Director. While his presence has led to a notable strengthening of the internal operations of ESF, his other professional activities have limited the time he has been able to spend on ESF business. Discussions are currently underway to develop new support structures. Jason Clark has continued to administer the finances of the foundation and to conduct other administrative business.

Board Membership

The membership of the board remained unchanged in 2007: Wallace DuTemple, Mark Fettes, Bonnie Fonseca-Greber, Grant Goodall, Timothy Reagan, Ian Richmond, and Humphrey Tonkin.

Overview

The array of activities undertaken by and supported by the Foundation indicates a highly successful year. But the Foundation continues to be plagued by the fact that those associated with it lack the time to give it their full attention. New forms of organization seem to be required. The decline in the value of the dollar and the downturn in the stock market have also limited the Foundation's financial flexibility and have led to active discussion about ways of limiting spending and increasing the Foundation's capital by additional fundraising.

GOALS FOR 2008

- 1. Develop and implement a fundraising / development strategy.** The board got off to a good start with the receptions in Montreal and Rotterdam, but we need to follow those up by developing a fundraising database (starting off with the people who came to our receptions), an initial annual appeal (perhaps timed for the Christmas season/Zamenhof-Tago), a list of prospective major donors, and a strategy for approaching the latter. The strategy would also encompass plans for

events in 2009, visibility in the Esperanto media, and use of the website to attract potential donors.

2. **Build on the Amsterdam conference to strengthen university-level collaboration on interlinguistics and Esperanto studies.** The concluding document from Amsterdam identified a number of worthwhile projects that ESF could play a decisive role in making a reality. This focus would help strengthen the relationship with CED, and could complement ongoing work to build on the Nitobe process in Geneva and elsewhere (see next point). ESF's redesigned web pages, together with the website edukado.net, would be important tools in this process.
3. **Work with François Grin and others to advance global/interlinguistic perspectives in language policy.** The Nitobe process may be continued in a number of ways, including the proposed series of conferences in Geneva, a possible symposium in Eastern Europe, and the further development of a web presence. We should try to involve more people actively in this process, and consider how existing resources such as LPLP might contribute.
4. **Develop strategic goals for our collaboration with Esperanto@Interreto and edukado.net.** The Lernu and edukado projects have gained a lot of credibility for ESF within the Esperanto community, and offer a lot of potential for new initiatives (such as Esperanto Aktuale, now underway). We need to sit down with the key players and explore how ESF can best work with them to meet our strategic priorities, in place of our current primarily reactive role.
5. **Rationalize ESF's spending policy, financial reporting, and project management.** Next year (2009) will mark the tenth anniversary of the Schulze bequest which helped to transform ESF. In those ten years our activities and ambitions have grown by leaps and bounds, but our administrative procedures have not kept pace. We are also confronting the possibility of a shrinking endowment and significant continuing costs for some projects. We need to set things on a sounder administrative footing to ensure that we can continue to function effectively and, potentially, to grow.