



Esperantic Studies Foundation Annual Report 2006

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The Esperantic Studies Foundation continued to work to fulfill its mission and operating plan during the past 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. An important event for the Esperantic Studies Foundation during this year was an Advisory Board Meeting held in Hartford, Connecticut, to review and update the Foundation's Medium Term Plan. 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 interlingual communication, (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.

Operating within this framework, the Foundation was able to continue to achieve a number of its goals for the year, and is making good progress in several areas, as identified below. At the same time, there remain areas in which the Foundation has not been as successful as we might like, and these are areas in which future focus may be required. Taken all together, however, it is clear that the Esperantic Studies Foundation continues to set an ambitious agenda for itself, and that this agenda will be maintained during the upcoming year.

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 2006-2007. ESF funds were used not only to continue to support "lernu!," but also to begin offering a version of the course as a university-level elective in Europe (at the University of Uppsala). 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.

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

ESF has been supporting this unique 3-week immersion program since 1998 and it had become a core educational priority for the foundation. NASK's 2006 session took place in July in Brattleboro, Vermont (at the School for International Training), as usual, but after careful reflection it was decided to return the program to the West Coast, where it had previously operated in San Francisco. Favorable conditions at the University of California San Diego, including the presence of ESF board member Grant Goodall, led to a decision to organize the 2007 session at that institution (July 9-27). The advantages of Brattleboro were considerable, not least because of the supportive attitude of the host institution, but Brattleboro is hard to reach, especially for overseas visitors, and is relatively remote from cities with concentrations of Esperanto speakers. 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 are now being translated into Esperanto and will be the subject of a scholarly article by Timothy Reagan and Bonnie Fonseca. 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.

Independent Study Esperanto Course

Under Grant Goodall's leadership, a university-level Esperanto course has been developed and approved at the University of California, San Diego. The course, which has received modest funding from ESF, was designed so that it could also be used at other higher education institutions. This project again is focused on the improvement of the teaching and learning of Esperanto (Strategic Area 2), and is explicitly identified in Objective 2.1.

Interlinguistics Certificate Program

ESF continued to provide scholarship support in 2006 for students enrolled in the Interlinguistics certificate program at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. Recent awardees come from Russia, Germany, Lithuania, France and Iran. Although this 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).

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 \$10,000 for the current year (2006-2007) of this four-year project, and has received a request for funding for the next school year. Although this is an educational project, and hence falls under Strategic Area 2, it also has clear

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implications for the building of research on the propaedeutic value of the study of Esperanto.

ELTE (Eötvös Loránd University) Esperanto Project

ESF has 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. There are a number of unresolved challenges and issues related to ELTE and the teaching, studying and researching of Esperanto both at ELTE and in Hungary in general. ESF may be able to play an active role in encouraging the teaching and learning of Esperanto at the university level in Europe, and there are several options available to us in the upcoming year. Although this is a complex undertaking that clearly touches on many of our strategic areas, it is probably best understood as a combination of Strategic Area 1, Strategic Area 2, and Strategic Area 3. It is clearly concerned with scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication, especially in the public arena, as well as with the teaching and learning of Esperanto, and the building of an intellectual community.

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, ELTE, and the University of Poznan. Although this is a complex undertaking that clearly touches on many of our strategic areas, it is probably best understood as a combination of Strategic Area 1, Strategic Area 2, and Strategic Area 3. It is clearly concerned with scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication, especially in the public arena, as well as with the teaching and learning of Esperanto, and the building of an intellectual community. Along the same lines the the ELTE situation, the GIL program actually crosses and includes a number of our strategic areas: it addresses Strategic Area 1, Strategic Area 2, and Strategic Area 3.

Esperanto Teacher Training Program in Africa

ESF has allocated 2500 euros to support an Esperanto teacher training program in Africa, with the understanding that there will also be a final report, preferably of publishable quality. 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

ESF has 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. Mr. Green and his team visited the 2006 World Congress in Florence and will be in Yokohama for the 2007 Congress.

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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 a proposal for Phase II has been submitted and approved (in 2007) by the ESF Board. 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. Although \$10,000 was approved for this fund, to date no suitable proposals have been received and funded. This is a matter of some concern. The Interlinguistics Support Fund was established as an alternative way of commissioning and supporting research (Strategic Area 1).

Nitobe Symposium

ESF has agreed to sponsor the upcoming 5th Nitobe Symposium in Japan in August, 2007. This symposium will explore the linguistic dimensions of Asian integration and globalization, but will also provide a further step in the on-going Nitobe process. A fourth symposium, supported by ESF, was organized in Bratislava, Slovakia, in November 2006, on "Perspectives of Language Policy and Language Rights in the EU." The symposium focused primarily on language policy in the Visegrad countries. The 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).

Nitobe Centre For Language Democracy

The Nitobe Centre was established by ESF following the 2005 Nitobe Symposium in Vilnius, Lithuania. Its goal is to serve as a convening mechanism and information source. Although an important first step, this is an area that has still to lead to concrete results. This remains Objective 1.6 in the ESF's Medium Term Plan.

Research Grant Awards

(1) In 2006 the Foundation provided a postdoctoral fellowship in the amount of \$10,000 to the Center for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University, to support the work of Dr. Nergis Erturk. This was its second award to the Center: in 2005 a similar grant provided support for Dr. Thomas Cooper, who later served as assistant director at the Center and is now at the Academia Hungarica, in Budapest.

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(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. Such undertakings are examples of both Objectives 1.4 and Objective 1.5, as well as the broader concern of Strategic Area 3 for 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. Several members of the ESF board and advisory board participated, and a planning meeting of the advisory board was held following the conference. This conference was concerned primarily with Strategic Area 1 (Scholarship and public discourse on Esperanto and interlingual communication) and Strategic Area 3 (Building an Intellectual Community), but also made possible activities related to the review of the Medium Term Plan for ESF.

Book Projects

There are a number of ESF-related book projects currently underway; one in the series Studies in World Language Problems, one involving the Nitobe symposium in Vilnius, and several others in which Board members may have an interest. The publication activities of the 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

For the past several years, Mark Fettes has played a key role as executive director of the Foundation, but of late his professional responsibilities have made it increasingly difficult to give the Foundation the attention it deserves and needs. Accordingly, in December 2006, Timothy Reagan replaced Mark Fettes in that position. However, family circumstances, and problems associated his resettlement in the United States, have prevented him from moving into full activity. Jason Clark has continued to administer the finances of the foundation and to conduct other administrative business.

Overview

The biggest problem faced by the foundation is the fact that its board consists of extremely busy people. Although monthly telephone meetings of the board take place regularly, with additional committee meetings from time to time, the board has difficulty maintaining an active overview of all of its activities, and systematic reporting, both operational and financial, remains a problem. Also problematic is the relatively low profile of the foundation, as a result of which researchers often do not turn to ESF for funding even though their projects fit ESF’s priorities. In 2006 there were no changes in the membership of the board or the advisory board.

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GOALS FOR 2007

There are a number of goals that ESF should pursue during 2007. Although not particularly new or novel, these goals seek to address continuing problems and limitations that ESF has faced, as described above. Specific goals for 2007 include:

- Increasing the visibility of ESF among North American scholars. This can be done in a variety of ways, but should include participation by ESF members on appropriate topics at relevant scholarly conferences, appropriate publications, and advertisements related to ESF support for scholarly initiatives (in LPLP, on appropriate websites, at conferences, etc.);
- Moving 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;
- Proceed with numerous in-process book projects;
- A thorough updating of our own website;
- Revisit medium-term plans for each Board member;
- 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;
- Address the operational needs of ESF in a more efficient and effective manner;
- Continue to review and address the financial base for ESF.