

ELNA UPDATE

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LANGUAGE WARS

The British Empire might be in full retreat with the hand-over of Britain's last significant colony, Hong Kong. But from Bengal to Belize and Las Vegas to Lahore, the language that spread from Britain is rapidly becoming the first global language. The reason is obvious: the American cultural and economic colossus.

There's much to be said for having a global language. It can cut down on misunderstandings, provide wider access to sources of knowledge, and improve and speed up communications. [The editor agrees with this sentence, but with another "global language" in mind!] But it can also lead to arrogance and complacency on the part of native English speakers and a sense of grievance and inferiority in other language groups. The English juggernaut is often blamed for the death of minority languages. Half of the world's 7,000 languages are expected to disappear in the next century. And because language and culture are closely intertwined, there is a danger of backlash. "We are very concerned that English could be perceived as damaging to other languages," says Caroline Moore of the British Council, a state-funded group that promotes Britain and British culture. Moore is part of a team that is looking into the future of English. It predicts that English will remain the biggest global language for the foreseeable future. "But we are mindful about what happened to French and Latin", says Moore. (*World Press Review* Oct 1997; originally in *Toronto Globe and Mail* Jul 12, 1997)

... AND LANGUAGE DEATH

The next century may become known as the century of language death. Though their figures differ, linguists are in broad agreement that most of the world's estimated 6,000 languages will die out over the next hundred years. These alarming figures have caused many linguists to argue passionately for the need to preserve these languages before they die out. They liken their cause to that of environmentalists who fight for the protection of endangered species. They argue that linguistic diversity is as critical to maintaining the richness of human culture as biodiversity is to maintaining the vitality of the ecosystem. Preserving endangered languages also protects weak and oppressed groups within powerful nation states. Views of language change with the times, and linguistic diversity has only recently come into vogue. Lingua francas, as Latin in the West and Chinese in East Asia, have enjoyed great prestige in history, usually in the form of a common

written language. In Europe, utopian thinkers have come up with a number of artificial languages designed to unite the continent. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, supporters of artificial languages, such as Esperanto, argued that linguistic diversity, the so-called language barrier, is one of the causes of war. Supporters of Esperanto have zealously promoted the language as a neutral language of peace. These arguments are as emotional as they are contradictory. [The writer does not understand that Esperanto aims at being a neutral SECOND language which transcends the language barrier without dominating national tongues. Esperanto can protect diversity while providing a common language. -ed.] Is linguistic diversity really "a good thing?" Do language differences cause conflict? More to the point, does language shape events and thought or is it shaped by them? Language evolves from the interaction of social, political, economic and demographic conditions, which linguists and language activists have little control over. The tremendous inequality in the world today clearly influences the fate of all languages. The few powerful languages in the world expand at the expense of minority and indigenous languages. The statistics are telling. Of the 185 or so sovereign states in the world, English is the official or common language in 46, French in 30, Spanish in 20, Arabic in 20. Only four languages are official in 116 of the 185 nations of the world. Three English speaking nations, the United States, Canada and Australia, have 425 indigenous languages, but almost 90 percent of these languages are not being learned by children, and will die out within a generation. In the Third World, urbanization and the active promotion of standard and official languages, such as English, French and Spanish, is destroying many indigenous languages. With so many forces working against minority and indigenous languages, the prospects for arresting the decline are very unlikely. Efforts to preserve endangered languages and promote artificial languages have, with a few notable exceptions, largely failed. They have failed because linguists and activists have focused on the symptoms of language death rather than the causes. To focus on the causes would amount to a call for a revolution, which would destroy the system that supports linguists and activists. Short of calling for a revolution, linguists and activists can lobby for changes in language policies of the nation state. Throughout history, strong centralized nation states with linguistic standardization policies have contributed to language death. England actively promoted English in Ireland from the 16th century until Irish nationalism in the late 19th century challenged English hegemony. Today, the Irish language is still alive

thanks to official protection and support. It has little chance of becoming the dominant language in Ireland, but the situation has stabilized and more people are learning Irish in Irish-only schools and adult education programs. In many other European countries, state support for endangered languages has stopped the decline, and in the case of some languages, contributed to expansion. State support consists mainly of bi- and trilingual education programs and support for native-language media and publishing. Most of these efforts have focused on preserving languages in their traditional territorial homelands. Lobbying the state to help preserve endangered languages, however, is largely ineffective if languages remain isolated within a particular ethnic group. Social and economic pressure will eventually cause these people to shift to a more powerful language later in life. The work of Linguapax, a Unesco-sponsored language education program, offers a way out of the preservation dilemma. Linguapax advocates multilingualism and linguistic diversity as a way to promote world peace and democracy. It produces course materials that integrate cross-cultural understanding of various ethnic groups into native and second language education. Linguapax calls for the linguistically weak and strong to work together to preserve linguistic diversity. This shifts the argument from preserving speech communities tied to a locality and an ethnic group to the creation of language communities—real and virtual—that transcend ethnicity and geography. The difference between endangered and artificial languages fades as different language communities emerge. Promoting language communities may risk turning many endangered languages into hobby languages detached from their ethnic and cultural roots. Linguistic idealists may shudder at this idea, but it is the best way to keep some endangered languages alive with some social and state recognition. Cornish in Britain and Ainu in Japan are still alive today because they have become hobby languages. If governments and private organizations can fund the arts and build sports stadiums, why can't they build help language communities prosper? (*The Korean Herald* Jun 4, 1997)

STRANGE DESCRIPTIONS

Esperanto (Non)Aesthetics

Fiona Hall was remarkably low-key for someone who had just been handed \$100,000. The Adelaide-based sculptor, photographer and installation artist was awarded the inaugural "Contempora 5" art prize yesterday at the National Gallery of Victoria. Viewers had to crouch down to enter her installation—a room made from stacked cardboard boxes, each containing small domestic objects moulded from yellow soap. In a second room, she had placed a selection of other work, including a series of silver sardine cans sprouting indigenous foliage. British guest judge Andrew Graham-Dixon said he was impressed by the breadth of Hall's entry. "The way she had the same sensibility nagging away at the same obsessions and interests but across a really wide range of media ... without

ever losing her own sensibility and without speaking the Esperanto of international contemporary art. She was speaking her own language." (*Age*, Melbourne, Australia Jun 4, 1997)

[Here we have one of the more common misleading references to Esperanto: some bland tasteless mishmash. Why don't reporters do a little more research? —ed.]

...and Esperanto Architecture

The mosque is now as much part of the British landscape as the satellite dish, the Indian restaurant and the privatized telephone box. It raises the issue of whether it's possible for Islamic buildings to blend into a British background - or whether they are destined always to look alien. Walking around the planned Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies will be like flipping between television channels, between stone-tiled roofs of the kind that keep out Cotswolds rain and heavy vaulted roofs that in their countries of origin would have kept off desert sun. The building will be surreal and startling rather than harmonious, but then it is hard to imagine how it could be otherwise. One could conceive of an ecumenical design, a sort of Esperanto architecture that brings Western and Eastern traditions together by reducing them to an abstract set of shapes and principles. (*UK Daily Telegraph* May 5, 1997)

[So this writer seems to think of our dear language as a sort of reductionist abstraction! —ed.]

...and Software as Simple as Esperanto

For NetWare administrators, connecting to the Internet and working with TCP/IP can be like learning Esperanto. Performance Technology's Instant Internet, our Editors' Choice, eases the process of linking IPX networks to the Internet. The product is a complete solution that is both easy to use and flexible enough to adapt to various bandwidth needs. Instant Internet installs very easily and simplifies connecting to your Internet service provider. (*PC Magazine* Nov 19, 1996)

[At least this writer got the descriptive connections right: complete solution, easy to use, flexible, simplifies.]

EU: MEP'S PLEA TO SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE

A left-wing Italian MEP, Riccardo Nencini, has introduced a proposal to the European Commission for a single European language, which he urged as inevitable after a single European currency is introduced. Mr Nencini said this would forge a more cohesive Europe, as more countries joined. "More and more countries are joining the European Union and more and more are applying to join," he says in his written question to the Commission. "Given that specific language characteristics need to be safeguarded, and given also that the process of European integration is forging ahead, does the commission not believe that it should mount a campaign directed at the member states to achieve this goal?" The commission—already under pressure over the unofficial spread of

English and currently estimated to translate three million words a day into member languages at a cost of twenty cents a word—is considering his scheme. Mr Nencini did not specify Esperanto as a common language. But this is seen as the only candidate since Latin receded as the lingua franca of education two centuries ago. “It’s very good news. Any consideration of Esperanto anywhere is very good news for us”, said Martyn McClelland, office manager of the Esperanto-Asocio de Britio in London. McClelland said that the Labour government had raised a spark of hope by deciding to rejoin the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco). [Perhaps it is also time for the U.S. to consider rejoining Unesco. Write to your Congress representatives if you agree!—ed.] In the mid-1980s, Unesco marked Esperanto’s centenary by recommending it be taught “in all educational establishments”. (UK *Guardian* Jun 4, 1997)

TIME TO REJOIN!

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NEW FROM THE BOOK SERVICE

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ALI002 \$10.95/\$10.40

AMARA VIVOVOJO, M. MANDRIK. A bitter life story of dealings with Gestapo and KGB agents, told with simple dignity and chilling detail. Not yet available in any other language. 1997. 77p. 215x135. Paper. USA. ISBN 1-882251-21-0

AMA001 \$7.65/\$7.25

ANALEKTOJ DE KONFUCEO. Trans. WANG Chongfang. The core of the Confucian wisdom tradition. This rich collection of analects deals with politics, philosophy, education, ethics, art etc. The most quoted work of Chinese literature. 1996. 114p. 200x125. Bound. China. ISBN 7-5052-0289-8

ANA003 \$16.00/\$15.20

DUDEK POEMOJ AMAJ KAJ UNU DESPERA KANTO/VEINTE POEMAS DE AMOR Y UNA CANCIÓN DES-ESPERADA, Pablo NERUDA. Trans. Fernando DE DIEGO. This bilingual edition will help those who strive to improve their knowledge of Spanish and serve those who like to see the original versions of poems. Beautiful poems full of emotion

and fresh imagery. Neruda's first and most popular collection of poems. 1997. 81p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil

DUD002 \$10.95/\$10.40

EKSTREMOJ, Miguel FERNÁNDEZ, Jorge CAMACHO, Gonçalo NEVES, Liven DEK. The stars of the “Iberian School” address extremely tricky and sometimes shocking themes of sex and drugs with extremely intense results. The lively prose style is reason enough to read these provocative stories again and again! 1997. 207p. 230x150. Paper. Austria. ISBN 3-901752-10-2

EKS002 \$17.30/\$16.45

FERVOJA TERMINARO/RAILWAY DICTIONARY, Div. This impressive volume provides bilingual translations of every conceivable expression used in the railroad business, with an eye to providing international standards for a business which is already profoundly international in its scope. Also available in twelve other languages. 1997. 355p. 205x145. Paper. Hungary

FER001 \$22.45/\$21.30

HORO KAJ LA VICO DE AŬGUSTO MATRAGA, LA, João Guimarães ROSA. Trans. Leopoldo H. KNOEDT. A story of a simple animal breeder and the complex wisdom he gleans from his surroundings. Although the author is famed for his difficult style, this story is an exception in its easy elegance. 1997. 63p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil

HOR001 \$10.95/\$10.40

INOCENTA, Alfredo D'ESCRAGNOLLE TAUNAY. Trans. Geraldo

PÁDUA. This romance novel exposes and protests the tyranny of men over women in the remote interior of Brazil, an area little known to outsiders. Written and set in the late nineteenth century. 1997. 237p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil

INO002 \$21.90/\$20.80

JOČJO MULATO + LA MASKOJ, Menotti DEL PICCHIA. Trans. Geraldo MATTOS. One of the first flowerings of Modernism in Brazil, this poem cycle deals with love and class struggles. Also includes two short dramas which feature romantic intertwinings of Columbino with Harlequin and Pierrot. 1997. 108p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil

JOC002 \$10.95/\$10.40

KONSPIRO DE KATILINO, LA, Kajo SALUSTIO Krispo. Trans. Gerrit BERVELING. Some fascinating moments in Roman history are described by a contemporary writer, who knew some of the protagonists first-hand. Line numberings of the original Latin text are preserved to help the student of Latin. 1995. 71p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil

KON005 \$9.15/\$8.70

MANOJ DE EŬRIDICA, LA, Pedro BLOCH. Trans. Geraldo MATTOS. A virtuosos theater-piece: a one-man show which covers an amazing breadth of material in a wide range of emotional states. 1997. 63p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil

MAN003 \$7.30/\$6.95

MANTO, LA, Paula MÄHRTI (pseud.). There are rumours that some of this hot novel reports scandalous events within the Esperanto community. Or is it merely

fiction? Perhaps you know some of the characters. Perhaps you are even in it yourself! 1997. 182p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
MAN002 **\$21.90/\$20.80**

MARKIZINO DE O..., *Heinrich VON KLEIST*. Trans. Reinhard HAUPEN-THAL. Romantic tale of an unforeseen pregnancy and its social implications. The happy ending is not what is expected. High artistry in the poetic prose style. 1997. 61p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
MAR004 **\$10.95/\$10.40**

MI JUNA, *Manashi DAS GUPTA*. Trans. Probal DAŠGUPTO. This autobiography presents the world of a young woman in India during the British occupation leading up to the tumultuous creation of a free Indian state. Fascinating details about the inner workings of traditional Indian families. 1989. 102p. 205x145. Paper. Netherlands. ISBN 0 9505323 9 8
MIJ001 **\$5.60/\$5.30**

POLICY FOR ESPERANTO, A, *Andrea CHITI-BATELLI*. Trans. Diccon MASTERMAN. This latest work (#44) in the series of UEA's "Esperanto Documents" presents a broad look at current language policies in national and international contexts, and suggests ways to promote Esperanto rationally and persuasively. A crucial treatise for anyone who supports broader official acceptance of Esperanto. 1997. 19p. 210x140. Paper. Netherlands-USA. ISSN 0165-2575
EDA044 **\$3.00**

RIKOLTO, *Juan Régulo PÉREZ*. Impressive volume in homage to one of the most important Esperantists of the last 50 years. Divided into 5 sections: Canary Islands; Esperanto-Lando; Philology; Philosophy; Reviews. Important work which not only mirrors the author's personality, but also shows important aspects of our movement. 1992. 596p. 205x150. Bound. Brazil
RIK002 **\$56.00/\$53.20**

ROBAIOJ, LA, *Umar KAJJAM*. Trans. Gaston WARINGHIEN. This world famous collection of divinely inebriating poems shows a scientist's world-view expressed with a poet's flavor. Includes learned and informative notes and introductions. Illustrations by Eugene KARLIN. Third edition 1997. 151p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
ROB003 **\$21.30/\$20.80**

SERVORAJTO, LA + LA SINMORTIGO, *Geraldo MATTOS*. Two short comedies which can be performed by five actors. Although amusing, these plays do not avoid serious themes! 1997. 55p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
SER007 **\$7.30/\$6.95**

SUPEO DE LA KARDINALOJ, Júlio DANTAS. Trans. Geraldo MATTOS. A nicely sentimental play which shows three old cardinals who dine together in the Vatican and reminisce about their various experiences as youths. 1997. 40p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
SUP001 **\$7.30/\$6.95**

UNU VOÇO, *Ewe-Calyptus*. A charming CD of Aussie songs. Of course, it includes *Waltzing Matilda* and goes on to a baker's dozen of other jewels, finishing off with eight sprightly instrumental tunes. Includes the 36-page booklet *Aŭstralio kantas sian historion*, which includes most of the songs on the CD and many others as well. 1997. Australia.
UNU001 **\$14.15/\$13.45**

URNO KUN RUNOJ, Meva Maron (pseud.). These poems show a wide range of styles and sentiments. An amazing talent springs into view already fully mature. 1996. 96p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
URN001 **\$10.95/\$10.40**

VIVOJ SEKAJ, Graciliano RAMOS. Trans. Leopoldo H. KNOEDT. In the style called "New Realism" this novel deals with the struggles of peasants against the elements during a prolonged drought. 1997. 135p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil
VIV008 **\$21.90/\$20.80**

ZODIAKIDOJ, LA, Rudyard KIPLING. Trans. Katelina HALO. Five charming short stories from the pen of a master storyteller. These are little-known works which the translator has chosen because they demonstrate Kipling's deep compassion for humanity. 1997. 87p. 210x140. Paper. Brazil.
ZOD001 **\$10.95/\$10.40**

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