

Review

STUDOJ PRI INTERLINGVISTIKO – STUDIEN ZUR INTERLINGUISTIK
Festlibro por / Festschrift für Detlev Blanke; ed. Sabine Fiedler / Liu Haitao.
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The subjects of language planning and language policy have been assuming increasing importance as we approach EU enlargement on 1 May 2004. The decision of the Seville European Council in June 2002 to consider the use of languages in an enlarged EU adds to its topicality. The appearance of a festschrift in honor of one of Germany's, and indeed Europe's, foremost language planning and interlinguistics scholars is thus particularly timely.

This impressive volume honors the work of one of the founding fathers of the discipline of interlinguistics, Dr. Sc. Detlev Blanke, first president of the German Interlinguistics Society (Gesellschaft für Interlinguistik e.V.), on the occasion of his 60th birthday. It contains scholarly articles by 43 authors from 19 countries, some two-thirds in Esperanto and one-third in German, highlighting some of Detlev Blanke's many achievements, and dealing with themes which are central to his research interests: language planning and language policy, lexicography, translation science, historical and applied aspects of interlinguistics. Articles in Esperanto carry abstracts in English and German; those in German have abstracts in English and Esperanto.

The book is divided into four parts: I. Language planning and language policy; II. Studies on theoretical, historical and applied aspects of interlinguistics; III. Esperantology; IV. Terminological and lexicographic aspects. The festschrift also contains a 45-page selection of some 500 of Blanke's 1,600 publications between 1958 and the end of 2000; a list of some publications about Dr Blanke, who has always combined exacting research with organizational activity; information on the contributors; and a usefully-detailed index of some 10 pages. The wealth of material provided in each of the 43 articles is such that a review can scarcely skim the surface of a vast, varied and unfailingly interesting body of work. Scope does not permit reference to every article, although I found every article to be of interest.

Part I contains eight articles, five in German: "Conscious interventions in language use – perspectives and problems in forming a comprehensive theory", by Kimura Goro Christoph (Japan); "Greek as an international language", by Prof. Johannes Irmscher (Germany); "Changes in the Balance of Power: Linguistic Implications", by Dr Werner Bormann (Germany); "The Language Problem in the European Union" by Hans Erasmus (Netherlands); and "Globalisation and European Foreign Language Training", by Dr Max Hans-Jürgen Mattusch (Germany). The Esperanto articles include: "Artificial and Natural Approaches in the Development of the Romanian Language in the 19th Century: A Historical Sketch", by Prof. Ignat Bociort (Romania); "The Situation of Swedish in the Fields of Technology, Mathematics and the Natural Sciences", by Prof. Christer Kiselman (Sweden); and "Human Rights, Linguistic Human Rights and Esperanto", by Dr Renato Corsetti.

Kimura makes a telling point (p 20), familiar to adepts of planned languages, but which touches a crucial reason for the instinctive and uninformed rejection of the concept of planned languages by many in the wider community: "A dichotomy of

“artificial” and “natural” language activities makes little sense, when one considers that language is not a natural event, but exists as a societal phenomenon and as part of conscious human action.” Bociort’s article also deals with the artificial vs. natural approaches to a language, this time the ethnic language, Romanian. This opposed those who wished to politically instrumentalize the language, emphasizing its Latinity by artificially replacing Slav, Greek and Turkish roots, to the winning naturalistic school, who argued that the language should remain intelligible to the common people.

Kiselman’s contribution deals with Swedish *språkvård*, a term which can cover both status and corpus language planning. He presents figures on the language of doctoral dissertations at Uppsala University in 2000 (Swedish: 23; English: 123, including all of those on medicine and the natural sciences; German: 1); and makes an interesting benchmarking proposal for Swedish scientific language: a comparison with existing terminology data bases in Icelandic. Corsetti writes of the unchanging nature of Esperanto discourse over more than a century: the plea for equal language rights and opposition to linguistic injustice. He points out that the world is more fertile for such ideas today than in Zamenhof’s time, but stresses the protracted nature of the struggle, as globalization is strengthening “the dominance of one language, culture and country”.

This theme is continued in the articles by Bormann, Erasmus and Mattusch, which topically deal with various aspects of EU language policy, in the light of increased English-language dominance despite “politically-accepted principles ... such as equality, language and cultural diversity, human (and language) rights, efficiency, etc.” (Erasmus, p 70). Bormann sees the EU as capable of challenging US supremacy, and that a loss of English-language hegemony “would provide new opportunities for neutral solutions, especially ... Esperanto” (p 57). He rightly used the example of Ireland (p 69) to caution that such a process is not automatic, and that “independence movements are all too compatible with retention of the imposed language”. Erasmus calls for a Europe-wide in-depth discussion on language policy, based on the .. interactive process.” (p 72-3). Mattusch (p 92) highlights the unfairness of the acceptance of English as a pivot or bridge language in interpretation following EU enlargement: such an arrangement would give native speakers of a English a double advantage, by sparing them the time needed to study other languages, and by giving them “a permanent advantage in negotiations” and a boost to national prestige at the expense of the majority of Europeans.

Part II contains twelve articles, of which nine are in Esperanto: “Planned Language: Between Engineered and Ethnic Languages (Report of a Typological Analysis)”, by Prof. Alexandr Dmitrievič Duličenko (Estonia); “Interlinguistics in a “cosmic dimension”: A journey between cosmoglottics and cosmolinguistics”, by Prof. Sergej Kuznecov (Russia); “Interlinguistics from an Informatics Perspective”, by Liu Haitao (China); “The Optimization of International Communication: The New Industrial Language Design from an Interlinguistic Perspective”, by Prof. Klaus Schubert (Germany); “The Metaliterature”, by Prof. Probal Daşgupto; “Essence and future – a centennial retrospective”, by Dr Mark Fettes (Canada); “A Forgotten Pan-Slavic Volapukist”, by Dr Věra Barandovská-Frank (Germany); “Ido in Hungary”, by Dr Árpád Rátkai (Hungary); and “Hands-on Interlinguistics (Language Planning as a Teaching Technique – A Report on an Experiment at Szombathely University)”, by

Dr Katalin Smidéliusz (Hungary). The articles in German in this section are: “Oka Asajirô, a Japanese Cosmopolitan”, by Dr Ulrich Lins (Germany); “Interlinguistics and the Internet”, by Ulrich Becker (Germany); and “Linguistic Inventions in Russian Science Fiction”, by Dr Cornelia Mannewitz (Germany).

Duličenko proposes a model of language creation according to which a planned language merely embodies a higher level of linguistic abstraction than a standardized literary ethnic language. In considering the a priori science fiction-related language project AO, Kuznecov makes the interesting point (p 136) that all references to this project, even in the largest Soviet libraries, had disappeared for political reasons: the regime was hostile to anarchism, from which this project sprung. Liu’s article discusses how, as shown by DLT, Esperanto is better adopted to information technology than natural languages, but due to superficial studies because of lack of financial support, its potential in natural language processing has not yet been fully realized. Schubert recalls Blanke’s description of interlinguistics as “the science of optimizing international communication”, looks at new industrial language design efforts and concludes that interlinguistics is a century ahead of the latter. Dašgupto writes of the need to make the key interlinguistic concepts and apparatus available to potential users who look at ethnic language literatures and who are still unaware of the existence and suitability of these tools. Fettes argues that interlinguistics needs to devote more attention to the theoretical and practical study of the social and cultural dimensions of Esperanto, rather than to technical metaphors and issues.

Lins discusses the most outstanding Japanese biologist of the 20th century, Oka Asajirô, and his involvement, and that of his two zoologist sons, with Esperanto. Becker points to the increasing use of the Internet for organizational purposes by Esperanto speakers, and lists a large number of hyperlinks for further research on interlinguistics and planned languages, a veritable treasure trove for the scholar. Smidéliusz describes an interesting linguistic experiment on the creation of linguistic projects by 33 students at Szombathely University, and Mannewitz writes of linguistic inventions in selected works from Russian science fiction.

Part III, containing 19 articles, is the largest section of the volume. The 13 Esperanto articles include: “Esperantology, Exogenous and Endogenous”, by Emeritus President of Hartford University, Prof. Humphrey Tonkin (United States); “The Nasals in the International Language”, by Daniele Vitali (Italy); “Phonostatistical Remarks on Esperanto”, by Constantin Dominte (Romania); “Frequency of Letters in Esperanto Texts”, by Prof. Ottó Haszpra (Hungary); “The Case of Case”, by Prof. Geraldo Mattos (Brazil); “Characterization of the Infinitive in General and of the Esperanto Infinitive in Particular”, by Otto Prytz (Norway); “Biblical Translation, Especially in Esperanto: Some Personal Experiences”, by Gerrit Berveling (Netherlands); “The Esperanto Movement: A Lost Community”, by Dr Zbigniew Galor (Poland); “René de Saussure (1868-1943) – a Tragic but Important Interlinguist”, by Andy Künzli (Switzerland); “Some Reflections on René de Saussure”, by Dr Balázs Wacha (Hungary); “Political Topicality in Esperanto Textbooks by East German Authors”, by Dr Till-Dietrich Dahlenburg (Germany); ““Die B/blanké Wissenschaft” – Ludic/Wordplay Communication in Esperanto”, by Dr. Sabine Fiedler (Germany); and “On the Aesthetic/Emotive Function of Esperanto”, by Dr Aleksandro S. Melnikov (Russia). The articles in German are: “Asian Loan Words in Esperanto”, by Prof. Erich-Dieter Krause (Germany); “Ethnonyms and Names of Citizens in German,

Russian and Esperanto”, by Prof. Ronald Löttsch (Germany); “Esperanto traces in Occidental”, by Prof. Otto Back (Vienna); “Will those evening bells sound right in Esperanto, too? (The problem of translatability in a planned language)”, by Prof. Heidemarie Salevsky (Germany); “Johannes Dietterle – Organizer of Scientific Work for Esperanto”, by Dr Hans-Burkhard Dietterle (Germany); and “Esperanto in Berlin: Histiographic Reflections”, by Fritz Wollenberg (Germany).

Tonkin’s thought-provoking contribution looks at the history of endogenous and exogenous Esperantology, “the study of linguistic, social, psychological, cultural and other aspects of Esperanto and its community”. He points to developments since the 1960s and 1970s, when linguists began to devote serious attention to Esperanto, due to increased interest in, and linkages with, language planning, sociolinguistics, language policy at the international level, Esperanto in machine translation, the relation of egalitarian communication in Esperanto to the whole question of linguistic human rights. Dominte provides the fascinating information that “With an average of 43 vowels and 57 consonants in 100-phoneme texts, Esperanto is a relatively vocalic language, located approximately between the more vocalic (Finnish, Turkish, Italian, Neo-Greek, Serbian, Croatian, Rumanian, Lithuanian, Latin, Slovak, French) and the more consonantal languages (Hungarian, Swedish, Czech, German and English). Haszpra’s study shows that the frequency of the controversial accented letters in Esperanto is a mere 2.38%, or one in every 42 letters. Mattos shows that that the usage of cases can be taught without special terms, by applying names directly derived from the regular character of Esperanto; and Prytz calls for further research on the use of the Esperanto infinitive by competent scholars, and particularly by Detlev Blanke.

Part IV contains four articles, all in Esperanto: “The Role of a Planned Language in Dealing with Conceptual Differences between Languages: The Case of Railway Terminology in Esperanto”, by Dr Heinz Hoffmann (Germany); “On International Language Communication in the Field of Forestry”, by Boris D. Marinov (Bulgaria), Dr Karl-Hermann Simon (Germany), Ingward Ullrich (Germany) and Dr Horst Weckwerth (Germany); “Big Numbers in Esperanto”, by Ulrich Fellmann (Germany); and “Challenges of Modern Lexicography in Esperanto”, by Dr Ilona Koutny (Hungary/Poland).

Errors in this work are minimal. Two Welsh words (p 442) in Prof. Salevsky’s article, quoting from Hjelmslev 1968, are mis-spelt: “gwyrrd” (rekte “gwyrrd”, “green”), and “llurjd” (rekte “llwyd”, “grey”).

The monumental work of Dr. Blanke, and of those inspired by his example, deserves to be more widely known and studied, particularly among those who have responsibility for framing language policy, whether at the local, national, or European/continental level. The festschrift is of both high intrinsic interest, and of crucial value in demonstrating to the wider community the depth and range of Esperanto scholarship. Here is a book of which one can truly say that no interlinguistics scholar, indeed no Esperanto speaker with even a slight interest in linguistics, can be without. *Nepre legenda libro.*

Reviewer's address

Embassy of Ireland
Friedrichstrasse 200
D-10117 Berlin.
sean.oriain@iveagh.irlgov.ie

About the reviewer

Seán Ó Riain (Ph.D., Trinity College, Dublin) has published research on language planning in Ireland and Québec (Ó Riain 1994). His diplomatic career has included Poland, Australia, Austria and now Germany. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr Brian Cowen, TD, launched his booklet on EU language policy (Ó Riain 2001) in July 2001.

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