

BIG PICTURE

Vivu Esperanto!

Members of the Esperanto Fellowship converse in the international language spoken by as many as 2 million people

IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY, Polish ophthalmologist L.L. Zamenhof envisioned a way to help build international understanding and, eventually, world peace. And so he created a language of hope: Esperanto, which, in Esperanto, means “one who hopes.”

To encourage its diffusion, Zamenhof used structures and vocabulary derived primarily from Romance languages, with a smattering of Germanic vocabulary — and without irregular verbs, gendered nouns, and complex grammar. You can become fluent in less than a year by practicing with the popular language learning app Duolingo and regular online conversations. But you don’t even need that, Esperanto speakers say. Learn a few simple rules of grammar with a textbook like *Complete Esperanto*, and with the book’s lexicon beside you, you can talk with Rotary members around the world.

You certainly won’t lack for company. With as many as 2 million speakers (including some native speakers), Esperanto continues to thrive in the digital age: Duolingo says its Esperanto course has been started by more than 1 million people. In addition to investor George Soros, among its speakers you’ll find the 57 members of Rotary’s Esperanto Fellowship—*Rotaria Amikaro de Esperanto* (RADE). The group, which traces its origins back to 1928, claims to be the oldest fellowship in Rotary.

RADE’s *membroj*, who live in 13 different *landoj*, use Esperanto at home and connect with fellow speakers via a smartphone app called *Amikumu*. A regular fixture of RI *konvencioj* (conventions) in years past, RADE now meets via Zoom, as well as through the only Esperanto-speaking club, the Rotary E-Club of Esperanto-Brasil. The *Esperantistoj* are like any other in Rotary, driven by our motto, rendered in Esperanto as *Servo Super Mio*.

—JOSEPH DERR

(Editor’s note: All RADE members quoted in this article are also members of the Rotary E-Club of Esperanto-Brasil, unless otherwise noted.)

LERNU ESPERANTON!

Ni kolektiĝu en la knajpo
 (“Let’s gather in the pub.”)

— Emma Mathilde Breuninger,
 Elchingen, Germany

MEMORANTE LA TEMPON...

► **Growing up in Berlin** at the end of the Second World War, the first thing the Russians gave us was a Russian grammar book. Then our school ended up in the American zone after Berlin was divided, and we got an English grammar book. I learned that language was power. Later on, I heard about a language without armies or coun-

tries, a language of fraternity called Esperanto. Then, I became convinced that it would be a great step forward, a second language for everyone that belonged to no one.

— Sandkühler Grattapaglia

► **At the 1970 World Esperanto Congress** in Vienna, I met the actor



Mi amas Esperanton

("I love Esperanto"). Esperanto motivates human beings to love each other and to serve one another.

— **John Emmanuel Magessa**,
Muleba, Tanzania

Agemaj homoj

("Active people") is the best translation for people of action, in my opinion.

— **Christoph Klawe**, Rotary
Club of Schweich Römische
Weinstrasse, Germany

Esperanto? Jes, certe Esperanto. Kiel dua lingvo por ĉiuj.

("Esperanto? Yes, certainly Esperanto.
As a second language for everyone.")

— **Ursula Sandkühler Grattapaglia**,
Alto Paraíso de Goiás, Brazil

Nikolay Rytkov, who had spent a few years in a gulag due to his Esperantism. He fled the Soviet Union during a previous congress and never returned home. In his autograph to me, he wrote: *Esperanto opens borders and hearts*. In the years since, I've been able to experience how right he was.

— Breuninger

► **In 1998**, at a World Esperanto Congress in France, we met Rotarians and they invited us to be part of Rotary. We accepted, and soon we were in the RADE booth at Rotary conventions ourselves.

— **Giuseppe Grattapaglia**, Alto Paraíso de Goiás, Brazil

LA AVANTAĜOJ DE ESPERANTO

► **When I use Esperanto**, I am celebrating and reinforcing the fact that there is only one humankind on one planet Earth and that humans are destined to live together in peace.

— Klawe

► **Esperanto makes you** a citizen of the world.

— Breuninger

► **I have many contacts** and have traveled extensively due to Esperanto. Like Rotary, Esperanto opens doors to a wonderful community. And best of all, in 2001, during an Esperanto festival in Italy, I met a Polish woman named Anna, with whom I have been married for 17 years!

— **Julio Calegari**, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

► **Via RADE**, it is easy to get in touch with other Rotarians worldwide, as there are no language barriers. This makes cultural exchanges possible, improving the respect for the cultural heritage of other nations.

— Klawe

► **Our club sponsors "Verda Lingvo"**

(Green language), a nursery school in Muleba, Tanzania. I am so touched when I see videos from the school. It makes me happy that we can help these wonderful children through our project.

— Breuninger

► **Esperanto has often helped** me in my profession as a physician. When confronted with an uncommon problem, I can consult authentic specialists in other countries. Through the international network of Esperanto speakers, we once managed to transfer a patient to a remote foreign hospital in his region of origin, where we had no other common languages to communicate; only Esperanto worked to make the transfer possible.

— Klawe