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## **A Comparison of Unish Grammar with Esperanto\***

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper lies in claiming that the grammar of Unish, which has been being developed at Sejong University, is simpler, more logical, and more regular in many aspects than that of Esperanto, which was created more than a century ago. The validity of this claim is checked by comparing Unish with Esperanto with regard to several main parts of grammar such as the formation of interrogative sentences and passive sentences, the system and use of personal pronouns and relative pronouns, the nonuse of expletives, and the non-occurrence of agreement in a noun phrase. On the basis of these comparisons this paper concludes that it is easier to learn and use Unish than Esperanto.

Keywords: universal language, Unish, Esperanto, comparison of grammars, principles of simplicity, logicity, regularity

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## 1. Introduction

As communication and trade between countries increase due to globalization, the need for a common language that can be easily acquired and used by all people in the world irrespective of their mother tongues also increases (Choo 1996, 2001; Hausser 2002; Kim 2001; Kim & Read 1999; Large 1996, 2002). To satisfy the need to overcome a language barrier to free communication the Sejong University has been developing a new universal language called *Unish* (Choo et al 2000; Chung 1996, 2001; Diamond 1996) for several years.

The grammar of Unish is being constructed on the basis of the principles of simplicity, logicity, and regularity. We argue that Unish grammar based on these principles is easier to learn than the grammar of Esperanto (Comrie 1996, Esterhill 2002, Li 1991, Park 1989), which was created in the late nineteenth century. To support this argument we compare the grammar of Unish with that of Esperanto from various viewpoints. These viewpoints are based on easiness in forming interrogative sentences and passive sentences, consistency and regularity in personal pronouns, simplicity in relative pronouns, logicity in the use of content words instead of expletives, and simplicity arising from the non-occurrence of agreement in noun phrases.

## 2. Comparison of Grammars in Esperanto and Unish

### 2.1. Interrogative Sentence

In Esperanto, the basic word order of a sentence is a subject (S), a verb (V), and an object (O)/a complement(C). In an interrogative

sentence a special word appears in the first position of the sentence.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) a. Vi ludas la pianon.  
 you play-Pres the piano-Acc  
 “You play the piano.”
- b. Ĉu vi ludas la pianon?  
 Intadv you play-Pres the piano-Acc  
 “Do you play the piano?”

As shown in (1), the placement of the word *Ĉu* in front of a declarative sentence makes a *yes-no-question*.

In a *wh-question*, which is another type of an interrogative sentence, the word that corresponds to a *wh-word* in English (namely, *who, when, where, what, why* or *how*) must appear in the initial position as illustrated in (2).

- (2) a. Kiam vi laboras?  
 when you work-Pres  
 “When do you work?”
- b. Kiu li vizitis?  
 who he visit-Pst  
 “Who did he visit?”

Thus, a *wh-question* in Esperanto is very similar to that in English in that a *wh-word* appears in the initial position of a sentence.

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used in the gloss:

Acc: accusative	Actprg: active and progressive
Adjl: adjectival	Adv suf: adverbial suffix
Futr: future	Gen: genitive
Intadv: interrogative adverb	Pl: plural
Pres: present	Prg: progressive
Psspref: passive prefix	Psspfr: passive and perfect
Pssprg: passive and progressive	Pst: past

On the other hand, in Unish the word order of a sentence (SVO/C) is always kept regardless of a declarative sentence or an interrogative sentence.

- (3) a. De        vered        tori.  
      you     see-Pst     bird  
      “You saw a bird.”  
      b. De        vered        tori?  
      you     see-Pst     bird  
      “Did you see a bird?”

The word order of the two sentences in (3) is the same. The only difference between them is that (3a) ends with a period (.), whereas (3b) ends with a question mark (?).

Due to the fixed word order (SVO/C) in an Unish sentence, a *wh-word* appears in situ, in accordance with its function in a sentence, instead of moving to the front of a *wh-question*.

- (4) a. De        vered        wat?  
      you     see-Pst     what  
      “What did you see?”  
      b. Wu        mited        de?  
      who     meet-Pst     you  
      “Who met you?”  
      c. De        mited        wu?  
      you     meet-Pst     who  
      “Who did you meet?”  
      d. Me        mited        de        wer?  
      I        meet-Pst     you     where  
      “Where did I meet you?”  
      e. De        vered        tori        wen?  
      you     see-Pst     bird     when  
      “When did you see a bird?”

f. De mited les we?  
 you meet-Pst they why  
 “Why did you meet them?”

In sentence (4a), the word *wat* ‘what’ functions as an object and thus it appears after the verb *vered* ‘saw’. The word *wu* ‘who’ in sentence (4b) functions as a subject and thus it appears before the verb *mited* ‘met’. Although the same word *wu* is used in sentence (4c), it functions as an object and thus it appears after a verb. In sentence (4d) the word *wer* ‘where’ functions as an adverb and thus it appears after the pronoun *de* ‘you’, which functions as an object. Both the word *wen* ‘when’ in sentence (4e) and the word *we* ‘why’ in sentence (4f) also function as an adverb and thus they appear after an object.

Therefore, the only difference between a declarative sentence and an interrogative sentence in Unish is that the former ends with a period or a falling intonation, but the latter ends with a question mark or a rising intonation. The only thing to remember in making an interrogative sentence in Unish is the fixed word order (that is, SVO/C). In Esperanto, however, a special word must be placed in the initial position or a *wh-word* must be moved to the initial position in order to make an interrogative sentence. Accordingly, in Unish it is easier to learn and make an interrogative sentence to which both a *yes-no-question* and a *wh-question* belong than in Esperanto.

## 2.2. Passive Sentence

In Esperanto many suffixes are involved in making a passive sentence.

(5) a. Vi verkis la libron.  
 you write-Pst the book-Acc  
 “You wrote the book.”

- b. La libro estis verkita de vi.  
 the book be-Pst write-Pssprf-Adjl by you  
 “The book was written by you.”

The sentence in (5b) is the passive counterpart of the active sentence in (5a). Since the tense of sentence (5a) is *past*, the suffix *is*, which indicates past tense, is attached to the verb *est* ‘be’ in (5b). In addition, the suffix *it* which indicates *perfect* aspect and the suffix *a* which indicates *adjectival* function are attached to the main verb *verk* ‘write’ in (5b).

When the sentence in (5a) is changed into a sentence that has *progressive* aspect as shown in (6a), the suffix attached to the main verb of its passive sentence is also changed into *at* as illustrated in (6b).

- (6) a. Vi estis verkanta la libron.  
 you be-Pst write-Actprg-adjl the book-Acc  
 “You were writing the book.”  
 b. La libro estis verkata de vi.  
 the book be-Pst write-Pssprg-adjl by you  
 “The book was being written by you.”

Depending on the voice and aspect of a sentence, the suffix attached to the main verb always varies in Esperanto. Nine suffixes (namely, *int*, *ant*, *ont*, *it*, *at*, *ot*, *o*, *a*, and *e*) are related to the form of a main verb in the process of constructing a passive sentence based on an active sentence.

In Unish, however, only one prefix is related to the form of a main verb in making a passive sentence, as illustrated in (7).

- (7) a. Me skribed buk.  
 I write-Pst book  
 “I wrote a book.”

- b. Buk beskribed be me.  
 book Psspref-write-Pst by I  
 “The book was written by me.”
- c. Me esed skribing buk.  
 I be-Pst write-Prg book  
 “I was writing a book.”
- d. Buk esed beskribing be me.  
 book be-Pst Psspref-write-Prg by I  
 “A book was being written by me.”
- e. Me gived buk tu de.  
 I give-Pst book to you  
 “I gave you a book.”
- f. Buk begived tu de be me.  
 book Psspref-give-Pst to you by I  
 “A book was given to you by me.”
- g. Les esil giving buks tu de.  
 they be-Futr give-Prg book-Pl to you  
 “They will be giving you books.”
- h. Buks esil begiving tu de  
 book-Pl be-Futr Psspref-give-Prg to you  
 be les.  
 by they  
 “Books will be being given to you by them.”

The sentences in (7b), (7d), (7f), and (7h) are the passive counterparts of (7a), (7c), (7e), and (7g), respectively. The only difference between an active sentence and its passive counterpart in the form of a main verb is that the prefix *be* is attached to the main verb in a passive sentence.

Therefore, it is much simpler and easier to make a passive sentence that corresponds to its active sentence in Unish than in Esperanto.

### 2.3. Personal Pronoun

The system of personal pronouns in Esperanto is as illustrated in table (8).

(8) Personal Pronouns in Esperanto

Person	Singular	Plural
First-Person	<i>mi</i>	<i>ni</i>
Second-Person	<i>vi</i>	<i>vi</i>
Third-Person	Male	<i>li</i>
	Female	<i>ŝi</i>
	Thing	<i>ĝi</i>

The plural form of personal pronouns is not regular and the singular form of the third-person pronouns is classified into three categories.

On the other hand, the system of personal pronouns in Unish is regular, consistent, and simpler than that in Esperanto as shown in table (9).

(9) Personal Pronouns in Unish

Person	Singular	Plural
First-Person	<i>me</i>	<i>mes</i>
Second-Person	<i>de</i>	<i>des</i>
Third-Person	<i>le</i>	<i>les</i>

Like the plural form of common nouns, a plural personal pronoun is obtained by attaching the suffix *s* to a singular pronoun. Thus, the plural forms of all nouns are made just by attaching that suffix to their singular forms. There is only one third-person singular pronoun and thus the referent of that pronoun is determined based on the context in which it is used.

Accordingly, the total number of personal pronouns in Unish is



smaller than that in Esperanto. In addition, the plural form of personal pronouns in Unish is regular, whereas that in Esperanto is irregular. Thus, it is easier to learn Unish pronouns than Esperanto ones.

## 2.4. Relative Pronoun

Depending on whether a relative pronoun functions as a pronoun or an adverb in a sentence, the relative pronoun to be used varies in Esperanto.

- (10)a. Mi        batis        mian        amikon,  
           I        beat-Pst    I-Gen-Acc friend-Acc  
           kiu                estas        maldiligenta.  
           who/which    be-Pres     lazy-Adjl  
           “I beat my friend who is lazy.”
- b. Mi        ludas        la        pianon,    kiun  
           I        play-Pres the        piano-Acc who/which-acc  
           miaj        gepatroj    ludis.  
           I-gen-Pl    parent-Pl    play-Pst  
           “I play the piano which my parents played.”
- c. Mi        havas        la        ĝardenon,    kies  
           I        have-Pres the        Garden-Acc whose  
           koloro    estas        verda.  
           color     be-Pres    green-Adjl  
           “I have the garden whose color is green.”
- d. Mi        manĝis        ion,        kio    estis  
           I        eat-Pst        something that    be-Pst  
           bongusta.  
           delicious-Adjl  
           “I ate something that was delicious.”

- e. Mi        renkontis    lin        hodiaŭ    matene,  
 I        meet-Pst    he-Acc    today    morning  
 kiam    mi        prmenis.  
 when    I        take a walk-Pst  
 “I met him this morning in which time I took walk.”
- f. Mi        vizitis        mian        hejmlokon,  
 I        visit-Pst    I-Gen-Acc    hometown-Acc  
 kie        mi        loĝis        antaŭ    dek    jaroj.  
 where    I        live-Pst    before    ten    year-PL  
 “I visited my hometown where I lived ten years ago.”

The relative pronouns *kiu*, *kiun*, *kies*, and *kio* appearing respectively in (10a-10d) function as a pronoun, whereas the relative pronouns *kiam* and *kie* occurring respectively in (10e) and (10f) function as an adverb. In addition, according to the case (namely, *nominative*, *genitive*, *dative*, and *accusative*) a relative pronoun takes, its form varies as shown in (10a-10c). For example, the relative pronoun *kiu* in (10a) takes *nominative* case, the relative pronoun *kiun* in (10b) takes *accusative* case, and the one *kies* in (10c) takes *genitive* case. Furthermore, when the head noun of a relative clause belongs to a special type as in (10d), a special relative pronoun *kio* is used.

On the other hand, in Unish only one relative pronoun (namely, *dat*) is used irrespective of its function in a sentence.

- (11) a. Les        mited        gens        dat        vered        muze.  
 they    meet-Pst    people    that    see-Pst    museum  
 “They met the people who saw the museum.”
- b. Me        laik        haus        dat        de        vered.  
 I        like        house    that    you    see-Pst  
 “I like the house which you saw.”
- c. De    lov    haus    dat’s    ruf    me    dezained  
 you    love    house    that-Gen    roof    I    design-Pst

- “You love the house whose roof I designed.”
- d. Evriding    dat    beanonsed                    surprised    les.  
 everything that Psspref-announce-Pst surprise-Pst they  
 “Everything that was announced surprised them.”
- e. Di        dat        de        leved                    beremor.  
 day    that        you    leave-Pst    Psspref-remember  
 “The day when you left is remembered.”
- f. Me        lov        kafe    dat    me        mited        de.  
 I        love        café    that    I        meet-Pst    you  
 “I love the cafe where I met you.”

Although the relative pronoun *dat* appearing in (11a-11d) functions as a pronoun, and the one *dat* occurring in (11e) and (11f) functions as an adverb, their form is the same. Except the occasion of *genitive* case the form of a relative pronoun is fixed regardless of the case it takes as illustrated in (11a) and (11b) (for example, the relative pronoun in (11a) takes *nominative* case, whereas the one in (11b) takes *accusative* case). Moreover, even when a special head noun of a relative clause occurs as in (11d), the form of a relative pronoun does not vary.

Therefore, the total number of relative pronouns in Unish is much smaller than that in Esperanto. This means that it is simpler and easier to learn the use and form of relative pronouns in Unish than in Esperanto.

## 2.5. Expletive

Expletives are not used in Esperanto. Instead, the subject of a sentence is totally omitted as shown in (12).

- (12) a. Estas    la        dua                    horo        kaj        dek  
           be-Pres    the        two-Adjl        hour        and        ten

- minutoj.  
 minute-Pl  
 “(literally) Is the two hour and ten minutes.”  
 “It is 2:10.”
- b. Pluvas            multe.  
 rain-Pres        much-Adv-suf  
 “(literally) Rains much.”  
 “It rains much.”
- c. Estas            varme.  
 be-Pres        warm-Adv-suf  
 “(literally) Is warmly.”  
 “It is warm.”

The sentence in (12a) is related to *time*, and the subject that indicates a point of time is missing. The sentence in (12b) is related to *natural phenomenon* of raining, and only a verb and an adverb occurs in the sentence. Sentence (12c) is related to *weather* and the word *varme* in the sentence is strangely an adverb, not an adjective. This means that in a subject-less sentence the part of speech for the word which comes after the *est*-Verb must be adverb.

In Unish, however, instead of an expletive a meaningful content word is used as the subject of a sentence, as illustrated in (13).

- (13) a. Time        es        fi        dute.  
           time        be        five    twenty  
           “(literally) Time is five twenty.”  
           “‘It is 5:20.”
- b. Sno        es        falig.  
           snow        be        fall-Prg  
           “(literally) Snow is falling.”  
           “‘It is snowing.”
- c. Rain        faled        yedi.  
           Rain        fall-Pst    yesterday

- “(literally) Rain fell yesterday.”  
 “It rained yesterday.”
- d. Weder es kul.  
 weather be cool  
 “(literally) Weather is cool.”  
 “It is cool.”
- e. Weder esed nube yedi.  
 weather be-Pst cloudy yesterday  
 “(literally) Weather was cloudy yesterday.”  
 “It was cloudy yesterday.”
- f. Wind blo todi.  
 wind blow today  
 “(literally) Wind blows today.”  
 “It is windy today.”

In (13a), the word related directly to time is explicitly used as a subject. In sentences (13b) and (13c) the real entity that falls from the sky is specified in a subject. In (13d) and (13e), the content word *weder* ‘weather’ is directly used as a subject in order to speak of weather. In sentence (13f), the actual entity that blows appears as the subject of the sentence.

Therefore, in both Esperanto and Unish the expletive that takes just the place of a subject is not used. In Unish, however, a content word is used as a subject and thus the meaning of a sentence is clearer and easier to be understood than that of a subject-less sentence in Esperanto.

## 2.6. Agreement in Noun Phrase (NP)

When an NP consists of a pronoun (or an adjective) and a noun, the former agrees with the latter in number (that is, *singular* or *plural*) and case (for example, *genitive* or *accusative*).

- (14) a. Mia        bona        amiko        venis.  
           I-Gen    good-Gen    friend        come-Pst  
           “My good friend came.”
- b. Miaj        bonaj                    amikoj        venis.  
           I-Gen-Pl    good-Gen-Pl    friend-Pl        come-Pst  
           “My good friends came.”
- c. Li        vizitis            mian                    bonan  
           he        visit-Pst        I-Gen-Acc        good-Gen-Acc  
           amikon.  
           friend-Acc  
           “He visited my good friend.”
- d. Li        vizitis            miajn                    bonajn  
           he        visit-Pst        I-Gen-Pl-Acc        good-Gen-Pl-Acc  
           amikojn.  
           friend-Pl-Acc  
           “He visited my good friends.”

In Esperanto, the suffix for making a plural noun is *j*, and the suffix *a* is attached to a noun (including a pronoun) or an adjective that modifies a noun. Thus, the suffix *a* is attached to a word which is assigned *genitive* case. In addition, the suffix *n* is attached to a noun whose case is *accusative*. But, no suffix is attached to a noun whose case is *nominative*.

In sentence (14a), the NP *Mia bona amiko* acts as a subject of the sentence and thus *nominative* case is assigned to it. Accordingly, no suffix is attached to the noun *amiko* in that NP. Since the pronoun *mi* and the adjective *bon* modifies the following noun *amiko*, the suffix *a* is attached to that pronoun and that adjective.

In (14b), the number of the noun *amikoj* is *plural* and thus the suffix *j* is also attached to the pronoun and the adjective that precedes and modifies the noun.

The number and case of the noun *amikon* in the NP *mian bonan amikon* appearing in sentence (14c) is *singular* and *accusative*, re-

spectively. Thus the suffix *n* is attached to the pronoun and the adjective that precede the noun in that NP.

In (14d), the number and case of the noun *amikojn* is *plural* and *accusative*, respectively. Thus both the suffix *j* and the suffix *n* are attached to the pronoun and the adjective that precedes that noun.

On the other hand, the agreement in number and case does not occur in Unish.

- (15) a. Me's      gut      ami      komed.  
           I-Gen    good    friend    come-Pst  
           “My good friend came.”
- b. Me's      gut      amis      komed.  
           I-Gen    good    friend-Pl    come-Pst  
           “My good friends came.”
- c. Les      visited      me's      gut      ami.  
           They    visit-Pst    I-Gen    good    friend  
           “They visited my good friend.”
- d. Les      visited      me's      gut      amis.  
           They    visit-Pst    I-Gen    good    friend-Pl  
           “They visited my good friends.”

As shown in (15a) and (15c), the form of the NP *me's gut ami* is fixed irrespective of whether it is assigned *nominative* case or *accusative* case. The same applies to the form of the NP *me's gut amis* appearing in (15b) and (15d). In addition, regardless of the number of a noun in an NP, the form of a pronoun or an adjective that precedes the noun is fixed as illustrated in (15a-15b) and (15c-15d). Thus in Unish the agreement between a noun and the words preceding that noun in an NP does not occur.

Therefore, while the agreement in number and case occurs in an Esperanto NP through the use of several suffixes, that phenomenon does not occur in an Unish NP. Since there is no need to remember suffixes related to the agreement in an NP and attach them properly

in Unish, it is easier to learn Unish NPs than Esperanto NPs.

### 3. Summary and Concluding Remarks

The comparison of several major parts in the grammar of Unish and Esperanto has shown that it is easier to learn Unish grammar than Esperanto one for various reasons.

First, the strict word order of a sentence in Unish makes it very simple to form an interrogative sentence in that neither a special word nor the movement of a *wh-word* is needed unlike Esperanto. Second, the use of only one suffix in forming a passive sentence in Unish is much more efficient than that of several suffixes in Esperanto. Third, the system of personal pronouns in Unish is more regular, more consistent, and smaller than that in Esperanto. Fourth, the use of just one relative pronoun in Unish makes it easier to form a relative clause than that of several relative pronouns in Esperanto. Fifth, the use of a meaningful content word as the subject of a sentence describing natural phenomena in Unish enables people to understand the sentence more quickly and clearly than the omission of the subject in Esperanto. Finally, the non-occurrence of agreement in Unish NPs makes it simpler to use NPs than the occurrence of agreement in the NPs of Esperanto.

Thanks to simplicity, regularity, consistency, and clarity of Unish grammar, people can acquire and use Unish more quickly and easily than Esperanto. In addition, both human translation and machine translation of an existing natural language into Unish can be carried out more efficiently and accurately than the translation of the language into Esperanto. Furthermore, Unish grammar is more flexible than the grammar of Esperanto since the former can be updated by linguists who conduct researches into Unish in accordance with the development of many natural languages used in the world.



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