

Language democracy, language rights, language equity and the use of languages for intercultural communication: a survey among students of Languages and Humanities in Brazil

The Prague Manifesto (1996) represents a document that aligns ideals considered central to the projection of Esperanto culture in the 21st century world. Subscribed by thousands of Esperantists, this manifesto can be considered representative of the values advocated and supported by official Esperantist institutions, such as the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA 1999). In particular, the Manifesto highlights ideas related to linguistic democracy and linguistic rights related to the teaching, learning and using of a language for international communication. In such contexts, problems related to the use of national or ethnic languages, such as English, have been highlighted for many decades (Phillipson 1992; Fiedler 2011; Farris 2023), while a significative amount of research in the field of Interlinguistics have highlighted the need and convenience of adopting a planned neutral language, such as Esperanto (Passini 1995; Koutny 2005; Blanke 2017; Fiedler & Brosch 2020; Corsetti 2021, Koutny 2023). To what extent, however, are the ideals of language democracy, language rights and language equity accepted and embraced by a non-Esperantist public? To what extent do people outside the Esperanto culture support the idea of adopting a planned language as a strategy for enabling fairer, more equitable and more democratic international and intercultural communication? The aim of this talk is to address these two questions. I developed and applied a specific survey to Brazilian university students of Languages and Humanities, in order to measure their adherence and agreement with the principles stated in the Prague Manifesto. Based on a questionnaire composed of 20 statements that declared opinions related to the themes of interest, students had to indicate the degree of agreement and disagreement with the statements listed, according to the Linkert questionnaire model, understood as the most appropriate method for evaluating opinions, attitudes and beliefs (Günther 2003). In this way, we hope to investigate whether the central ideas of Esperanto culture present in the Prague Manifesto are also acknowledged outside the Esperanto movement in Brazil, as an important part of the beliefs and opinions of language and humanities students at Brazilian universities.

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