



Tutmonda Esperantista Junulara Organizo

TEJO AND LANGUAGE POLITICS

Languages and Human Rights





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Introduction

This document defines the positions of the World Esperanto Youth Organization (TEJO) in relation to language policy. Its purpose is twofold:

On the one hand, it aims to serve as an internal reference for TEJO members to learn about the official opinions of their organization on language policy, which is one of our core goals and activities as Esperantists. This is particularly important when representing TEJO to non-Esperantists and external organizations, because this is where to find our official opinions and positions. In that regard, the external relations strategies of our organization should be defined later in accordance with them.

On the other hand, this document aims to present what our organization thinks about language policy questions, how international communication and linguistic diversity is and should be, and why Esperanto is the best tool for that.

An ideal language policy should be compatible with the following fundamental principles, which we believe in and which we intend to respect through this position: Equality, Justice, Efficiency, Diversity, Peace and Human Rights.

This document derives from the document "Language policy positions of TEJO", developed by a working group from TEJO's Committee during the IJK 2011 in Kyiv. The TEJO Committee voted and accepted it during its extraordinary meeting in Gdansk, on December 30th 2011, during the Youth Esperanto-Week (JES).

In November 2021, as part of a Human Rights youth international educational activity funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe (CoE), that took place during the event *Klaĉkunveno Post-Somera* (KKPS) in Ry, Denmark, its participants decided to update that position with more thorough content and a stronger Human Rights basis.

After engaging several activists, the document was initiated by a working group at the end of 2021. After a long discussion, it was presented to and approved by TEJO's Committee May 6th 2023 by online vote.

This document was written, discussed and voted only in Esperanto, in accordance with the official language of the organization. The Esperanto language version of it is therefore the original used in TEJO. Any translation of it into another language is intended to inform non-Esperanto speakers about the positions of our organization.



Language Rights and Human Rights

Texts related to language policy in the Esperanto movement

The Statute of TEJO

The positions illustrated in this document are primarily based on the [Statute](#) of TEJO, which mentions objectives and activities (Chapter 1) that define the interest and essential idea of the Organization's language policy (bold emphasis added):

1. **to spread** the use of the international language **Esperanto**;
2. [...]
3. acting on the solution to the **language problem in international relations** and to facilitate international communication;
4. to facilitate **all kinds of spiritual and material relationships** among the people, regardless of differences related to nationality, race, sex, gender, gender orientation, religion, politics or **language**;
5. to help the youth to have an active role in the construction of a **sustainable, inclusive, international, mutual understanding and rights-respecting society**; [...]

Additionally, the same chapter lists in our core activities:

- A. information in youth environments about the **language problem in international relations** and about its **solution in Esperanto**;
- B. practical use of Esperanto at the service of the youth and information about this in youth environments; [...].

Chapter 2 of our Statute defines our acting principles as:

5. Neutrality

1. **TEJO opposes discrimination** in relation to nationality, race, sex, gender, gender orientation, disability, religion, politics, social origin and language;
2. **TEJO is independent of any party**;
3. **TEJO is neutral on matters unrelated to its objectives**.

6. Essential conditions

For the activity of TEJO essential conditions are:

1. **good international relations**;
2. **respect of Human Rights** such as they are defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other internationally recognized instruments; and



3. **sustainable development** according to the definitions of the United Nations and other internationally recognized instruments.

Those principles are reaffirmed by the [Strategy Plan 2020-2025](#), which defines that:

"Esperanto is spoken widely and worldwide known as a suitable solution to the language problem. The global Esperanto youth are able to act and create better societies based on their vast experience. TEJO is a collaboration network for the global Esperanto youth and the youth organizations and associations worldwide."

Fundamental documents of the Esperanto Movement

The **Boulogne Declaration** (more officially "[Declaration on the Essence of Esperantism](#)") underlines the importance of refounding international communication through a language like Esperanto. It was written by L. L. Zamenhof itself and accepted by the members of the first Universal Congress of Esperanto (UK) in 1905. It defines the Esperanto Movement, explains its goals and essence, namely "to spread throughout the world the use of a neutrally human language". The Declaration ensures the neutrality of Esperanto: "therefore, Esperanto is *nobody's property*, neither in a material relation, nor in a moral relation".

The [Manifest of Prague](#) about the international language Esperanto is moving from Esperanto to the international movement: "to all governments, international organizations, and people of good will". The Manifest was adopted during the 81st UK in Prague in 1996, and consists of seven core principles in relation to language policy, which TEJO also considers its own and on which this document is inspired. Here is their summary:

1. **Democracy:** The current communicative system "privileges certain people for life" and is "undemocratic"; according to the Manifesto, Esperanto "far surpasses every rival in the realm of peer-to-peer global communication";
2. **Transnational education:** Esperanto contributes to global-perspective education, not only as part of specific countries or cultures;
3. **Pedagogical effectiveness:** Several studies have proven that Esperanto is much more easy to learn than other languages, and facilitates subsequent learning of additional languages;
4. **Multilingualism:** Learning Esperanto, and often consequently other languages, generally leads to "a wider personal horizon";
5. **Language rights:** In the Esperanto community, members of the various language communities "meet on neutral ground" and there is no "language suppression". The current power difference between the languages prevents the concretization of many international texts calling for equal treatment regardless of language;



6. **Linguistic diversity:** For the signatories of the Manifesto, linguistic diversity is not a barrier, but on the contrary - to be protected "a permanent and indispensable source of wealth";
7. **Human emancipation:** While every Language simultaneously frees and imprisons its members, Esperanto enables everyone to participate in the human community. "Exclusive use of national languages inevitably sets up barriers to freedom of expression, communication and association".

UNESCO Resolutions about the Esperanto movement

Esperanto and the Esperanto Movement are already internationally recognized. The century-long work of the Universal Esperanto Association (UEA) and of TEJO as its youth section has been recognized by UNESCO, in [two resolutions](#):

- **Resolution of Montevideo** (1954), which for the first time acknowledges the achievements and goals of Esperanto, as compatible with the goals and ideals of UNESCO.
- **Resolution of Sofia** (1985) accepted on the occasion of the centenary of Esperanto, once again underlines the importance, achievements, intertemporal progress and values of Esperanto for the international community, and encourages member states to further introduce it.

Language rights and internationally recognized and Human Rights texts

Since the creation of the language, the Esperanto movement strives through a common language to improve the world, peaceful, fair relations between people and peoples, and to improve the respect and dignity of all people. These moral principles are legally and politically concretized through the notion of Human Rights, according to which every person has inalienable and universal rights. Because they match the goals of the Esperanto movement, and make them concrete, Human Rights are central to Esperanto organizations such as TEJO and UEA.

Human Rights are recognized and defined by several documents of international law. Many of these rights are embodied in language, which is why it is possible to talk about **linguistic Human Rights**. A linguistic right is the right to choose in which language to communicate, privately or publicly. As will become clear during the subsequent paragraphs, these linguistic rights are recognized by those mentioned below documents: therefore the principles affirmed in this document are also reflected in international law. We will first explore the statements of the United Nations (UN), the most global interstate organization, then those of world regional bodies.

United Nations (UN) documents

The [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) is the UN's most fundamental Human Rights text.



Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees the applicability of these Human Rights to everyone, regardless of, among other things, language. The following articles implicitly refer to language rights:

- Article 10 is about a fair trial, which is not possible if the accused does not understand the trial or cannot express himself in a language fully owned.
- Article 19 is about the right to freedom of expression, which is not complete without the freedom to express one's point of view in the most comfortable language(s).
- Article 21.2 is about access to public jobs in their country, which favors members of a language group if their language is the main one.
- Article 23.1 is about the right to work, which is more easily fulfilled for those who know the hegemonic languages.
- Article 25.1 deals, among other things, with the right to medical care, which requires successful communication with healthcare providers.
- Article 26 deals with the right to education which, on the one hand, should be "obtainable" (so also linguistically accessible), and on the other hand aims to foster "understanding, tolerance and friendship between all nations, racial or religious groups". In this regard, language learning has a key role.
- Article 27 deals with the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, which obviously requires the use of a language.

The [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) clearly mentions and rejects language-based discrimination in its articles 4, 24, 26 and 27 and, in the case of a trial under article 14, the right of the accused to receive information and, as necessary, interpretation in a language understandable by the accused.

The [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) (ICESCR) shows, on several topics, a clear language-related connection:

- In article 6.2, in connection with the right to work, it adds that in order to fulfill this, states should provide technical and professional guidance, training and programs to ensure permanent economic, social and cultural development and decent, subsistence work. Any type of education is related to a language, either because of the language of instruction in it or teaching languages to provide someone with additional opportunities.
- Article 15.2, in connection with the right to participate in cultural life, requires that the states act to protect, develop and spread science and culture.
- Article 15.4 acknowledges the good of international contacts and joint activity in science and culture, which clearly requires international communication.

Definitely worth mentioning is the [Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007, which has a clear content in relation to language rights:

- Article 13.1 guarantees the right of indigenous peoples to revive, utilize, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literature, and additionally the



right to assign and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

- Article 13.2 affirms the right to understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings, and to receive interpretation if necessary.
- Article 14 deals with education in their own languages and obliges states, in collaboration with the communities, to strive for indigenous people to have access to education in their own language, even for those who live outside their communities.
- Article 16 is about the right to establish one's own mass media in one's own languages.

The [Universal Declaration of Language Rights](#), which was born with the support of UNESCO, was neither approved by a supranational organization nor ratified by any state, so its legal authority is extremely weaker than the above mentioned texts. On the other hand, it is a fundamentally important reference text on language rights, with a strong focus on collective language rights.

According to its article 5, "*the Declaration is based on the principle that the rights of each language community are equal and independent of the legal or political status of its language, official, regional or minority*". Apart from article 13, there is a right to multilingualism and to learning the most appropriate language for personal development or social mobility.

In addition, the [Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#) of 1959, both in its introduction and in its first principle, supports the equality of all children regardless of language. The [International Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) of 1989 emphasizes even more strongly this right. In addition:

- Article 29 requires that education aims to respect one's own cultural identity, language and values.
- Article 30 guarantees children from ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or from indigenous origin to use their own language.

World regional Human Rights texts

The first internationally designed Human Rights instrument, the [American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man](#) of 1948 (or Declaration of Bogotá) mentions, in its Article 2, the equality before the law of all people regardless of, among other things, language. In the same spirit the [American Convention on Human Rights](#) (better known as Pact of San Jose de Costa Rica) of 1969, in its article 13, condemns hate speech and incitement to violence against any person or group, including language based cases.

Based on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Organization of American States approved in 2016 the [American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). Among other additions, it can be mentioned that, in its article 15, it requires that the states cooperate with the communities for intercultural education that reflects the world views, languages and cultures of these peoples.



The [European Convention on Human Rights](#) of the Council of Europe (CdE) in 1950 affirmed the importance of language for a fair trial, in its articles 5 and 6. In 1992, CdE member states signed the [European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages](#), with full linguistic focus. In its introduction, the document affirms that use, in private and public life, of a regional or minority language is an inalienable right. The charter contains a number of minimum requirements aimed at protecting the linguistic rights of minority speakers in relation to education, justice, public administration, mass media, cultural activities and infrastructures, social and economic life and cross-border exchanges.

The [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) of 2000 affirms the respect of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, in its article 22. Article 41 defines the right of any person to address EU authorities in one of the EU languages and to receive an answer in the same language.

The [African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights](#) of 1981 departs from the usual framework of individual Human Rights and also approaches collectively the subject of "people's rights". It affirms that colonized or oppressed peoples have the right to break free from that rule, and are entitled to the assistance of other countries in their struggle for political, economic or cultural liberation and that this development takes place within a strict framework of respect for freedom and identity and of equal enjoyment of the common property of mankind.

TEJO believes that this cultural liberation struggle also means the defense of the oppressed languages, and that an international neutral auxiliary language is an essential tool to implement a truly equal enjoyment of the common property of humanity.

The [Arab Charter on Human Rights](#), approved by the League of Arab States in 2004, presents again the importance of languages in justice, but also protects the rights of the members of minorities to enjoy their culture, use their language and practice their religion within a legal framework. It also obliges the states to try as much as possible to guarantee equal opportunities without distinctions based on, among other things, language and national origin.

The [Declaration on Human Rights of the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations](#) (ASEAN) of 2013 points out that the fulfillment of Human Rights must be considered both regionally and nationally according to different political, economic, legal, social, cultural, historical and religious backgrounds. In relation to the right to education, this declaration also mentions that it must enable everyone to actually participate in society and to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship between national, racial and religious groups.



International language policy, the first state

Linguistic discrimination: an introduction

Through languages, humans organize and build themselves as an individual and as a society. Language is in all this invisible glue.

The native languages (one or more according to the family and social background) are received and not chosen by the individuals: they are transmitted by parents and the environment of origin. Because of this, they are essential characteristics of each person, similar to skin color, gender, ethnic or social affiliation. Discrimination on the basis of language is therefore equally unfair and unacceptable.

Very often linguistic discrimination is a consequence of discrimination based on other characteristics such as ethnicity, socio-economic group or religion, which is the background of hatred against a specific group. That plural discrimination deserves special awareness and combat.

The ability to live with a fluent spoken language is a prerequisite for full activity and citizenship in any society. Even the **Human Rights, which must be the foundation of all societies, often according to the language used are implemented and unimplemented**: this linguistic aspect is often misunderstood and underestimated. A choice to provide specific services or to facilitate access in some languages but not in others has social consequences.

This statement links language rights to several other Human Rights, among others: the access to legal protection and to public services, education, free speech and participation in the governance of one's own country, social organization and cultural life. This is repeatedly underlined by the previously mentioned international texts on Human Rights.

Beyond Human Rights, language protection is important politically, economically, scientifically and culturally. Protecting language and language rights means protecting the concrete interests of the speakers, their opportunities to study, work and be politically active. Loss of functionality of a language means culturally and materially underprivileged the native speakers of that language.

Individual and collective language rights

TEJO acknowledges individual linguistic rights (such as the right to a proper name and the right to use any language in private and in public) and collective linguistic rights (such as the right to teach one's language or fair representation in the media). Those two types of rights are interdependent.

Language communities own collective language rights. These rights are often necessary to implement the individual language rights, such as access to justice, education or public services in the language(s) of a specific language community. On the other hand, individual language rights presuppose favorable conditions of the language community. Concretely, the individual right to speak a language in public is destroyed when the surrounding society loses the ability to communicate



in a language because it is no longer taught or transmitted, or when the public administration does not allow interaction in that language.

Individual linguistic rights cannot justify undermining collective linguistic rights, especially those of indigenous, minority and dominant languages. On the other hand, collective language rights do not become a tool for injuring the Human Rights of minorities through the predominance of a dominant language over minority ones.

Since peace is an indirect goal of the Esperanto Movement, we also emphasize that respect for Human Rights, language rights and non-dominant relations between languages and peoples create favorable conditions for sustainable peace, domestically and globally. We strive to contribute to that goal by offering appropriate means for fair and effective global communication and mutual understanding.

What is the international language problem?

The "problem(s)" of international communication are multilateral(s).

On the one hand, we need effective communication. In a very multilingual world, this is only possible when there is, silently or openly, an agreement that everyone should learn at least one common language. The choice of one of the national languages, however, causes great inequality in the world. Native speakers of that dominant language enjoy many advantages around the world in several fields (business, culture, education and science), while the rest of the world must strive to learn their language as a foreign one. Thus, non-native speakers lose a significant part of their ability to express themselves in the foreign language and become sidelined from international communications. This is also a waste of human intelligence, due to discrimination based on language, and not a fair selection based on competence or expertise.

This becomes particularly concrete when there are divergent interests, for example when you have to defend your position in court or when you compete for awarding a commission or subsidy: then the right to use the native language to some participants gives rise to concrete inequality when native and non-native speakers compete, with possible economic and social consequences. In some cases, this violates even basic Human Rights because, as we continue to notice, many rights are fulfilled in language. **A language barrier becomes a barrier to Human Rights.**

On the other hand, from the point of view of communication, the choice of national language is not effective. They can be very suitable for communication within one nation or language community, but not necessarily internationally. A language that serves humanity as a means of communication between people of different native languages should have different characteristics than a language spoken by its natives: such a language should be as easy as possible to learn. Therefore, it should have as regular grammar and spelling as possible, a flexible syntactic and word-making system, so that non-native speakers can find an expression that is relatively natural to them.



Why is English not a solution, like every ethnic language?

Ethnic languages developed historically and are natively spoken by one and several tribes, unlike a planned language like Esperanto. It can be a national language or not. The term "national language" in this document is used to mean an ethnic language that aims for nationwide communication within a particular country, territory or ethnic group, often with a symbolic unifying role for that nation and state support or authorities.

Currently, English (ethnic and national language, even multinational) is the most used language for international communication. It is relatively widespread in the world, and in fact enables quite a few people to communicate internationally, perhaps more so than ever before in human history. However, there are still many social groups and territories in which knowledge of the English language is very limited or even zero. In concrete terms, English is the native language of 7% of humanity and is fairly well understood by only one quarter of the world's population, while 70% of the world population do not know it. In the case of the European Union, if legal and political texts were only in English, they would be difficult to access for four fifths of the citizenry, and altogether incomprehensible to almost half.¹ That prevents most of humanity from integrating into the world's communication and economy. **The use of a national language as an international language, even if it is already widespread worldwide, cannot create true equality in communication.**

International auxiliary languages have a special role in communication, because they must enable communication between native speakers of dissimilar languages, with various phonetics, grammars and words. It must also be effective in very different contexts, even when their speakers have a low language level. Because of that, **Esperanto is more suitable than all ethnic languages, because it was created purposefully to be efficient with logical and regular structures** which one rarely troves in the internationally used ethnic languages.

English for TEJO is one of the ethnic and national languages, just like all the others. It is a medium of expression of very rich cultures, strongly linked to the colonies and also powerful Great Britain and the United States, whose cultures are mainly mediated by the English language. In terms of the number of speakers, it is certainly one of the world's largest languages. However, in those fields where English has been chosen as (one of the) language(s) to be used for international communication, it, according to TEJO, represents an arbitrary choice that causes linguistic discrimination and communication inefficiencies. Several internal features of English, such as its own, strongly contribute to this inefficient complex vowel system, abundance of irregular verbs, extensive vocabulary, not intuitive use of prepositions and, most importantly, extremely irregular spelling.

English as a language is certainly not the enemy, nor is its use or teaching in an

¹ [Multilingualism at the UN: an emergency! -Jean Fabre-UN Today](#)



inclusive and non-violent way. Those people and supporters of the privileged role of English may be our opponents, depending on their arguments. In our view, the English language is and should be primarily a (multi)national language instead of an international language, just like other languages such as Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian or Swahili.

Hegemonic languages, linguistic imperialisms and privileges

The extensive spread of several national languages is a consequence of historical imperialism of some states or civilizations. That is why some of the most spoken languages in the world have spread, as in the case of English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Portuguese or Russian. Through conscious policies, particular languages have historically gained prestige, as the previously mentioned languages among others, which is currently reflected in international bodies, in business and in communication. Those few languages have even acquired hegemonic roles domestically and internationally, repelling and diminishing others and their languages. The use of dominant languages as international languages continues that imperialist legacy.

It is worth noting the "**hegemonic language privilege**" of the native speakers of those languages, who find themselves in a particularly favorable situation due to a lack of demand - within the context in which that language prevails - to learn another language or to adapt to foreign standards. However, this should neither condemn the speakers of dominant languages, who most often are not themselves responsible for this state, nor disparage the language itself or cultural objects mediated by it.

Such a hegemonic linguistic situation can occur in various contexts on a national, country or regional scale.

In the world language order, the English language plays a special role worldwide. Therefore, innate knowledge of it gives concrete privileges, not just where it is an official language. That **English language privilege** manifests itself in various contexts, internationally and domestically, and contributes to a higher status of those who know English. That privilege is primarily that of native speakers of English, and to a different extent of learned speakers of the language as well. This constitutes a privilege that TEJO considers unfair. Some examples will be mentioned below for illustrative purposes.

In education and science, this role of the English language often gives its native speakers the privilege of not needing foreign languages and the access to study programs in their language, even in non-English speaking countries.



Meanwhile, most of the languages are not used for higher education² and, even when they are used, part of the learning material is not available in the relevant language. More generally, native speakers of English can most easily find a translation in their native language, either of cultural items, or of information and directions about everyday things, for example tourist brochures, or about extremely complex subjects, for example specialized research.³

In the labor market, native knowledge of the English language is an incomparable advantage: On the one hand, in many positions knowledge of English is required or at least strongly preferred. On the other hand, it is often the only language that allows access to high-level jobs abroad, sometimes even without knowledge of any local language.

Using English as an international language creates injustice domestically, even where it is not a local language. People who are in a more favorable socio-economic situation are often also those who achieve a higher level of formal education and who have access to additional language courses and to study abroad to refine their language knowledge. Because of this, high-income earners have a strong economic and cultural advantage. On the opposite side, people with fewer resources have limited access to studying English, and therefore, to much fewer opportunities in the labor market and in studies.

This "hegemonic linguistic privilege" of English speakers is also reflected economically and politically between countries. Internationally, English-speaking countries benefit in many ways from the dominant situation of their language.

In the exemplary case of the European Union (EU), where almost all national languages are official, the de facto bridging language role of English and its general teaching bring in between 10 and 18 billion euros per year to the economy of the United Kingdom and, on the contrary, outspend that of other speaking countries (according to a study from 2005, when the United Kingdom was a member of the EU). The same research concludes that using Esperanto as a bridge language in the EU (institutionally and through public education) would save a total of 25 billion euros per year (according to estimates at the time) and would be the fairest and most effective language policy choice, compared to only using English or enhancement of some national languages.

A more recent similar study on the subject is not available; however, it can be concluded that the imbalance has increased since 2005, due to the accession of non-English-speaking countries to the EU and the withdrawal of Great Britain. If these conclusions are specifically about the European Union, they also allow us to imagine the potential of a similar solution for other parts of the world as well, on a global scale and for other international organizations.

² Only 82 languages were used in 2002 for university education. ["Concise Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics": "Languages in Tertiary Education" \(page 298\)](#)

³ ["Top Languages in global information production" - Sergey Lobachev](#)



Multilingualism in international communication

Most of humanity is at least bilingual. TEJO defends that multilingualism should be targeted and language education should be supported.

Communication and interpretation play an important role in local and international communications. They are essential, for example, in a legal context of a fair trial and to provide information to citizens, as well as in the health system, in business, in dealing with recent immigrants and more generally for enabling real multilingualism. TEJO believes that the public institutions have the duty to provide such linguistic support, at least for the implementation of Human Rights, as this is required in the field of justice, according to several Human Rights texts mentioned earlier. This need for multilingualism is not only a moral requirement, but also a practical one, because it is beneficial to the credibility, acceptance and impact of institutions among citizens.⁴⁵ Translation has also always played an important role in making cultural objects accessible beyond language barriers.

However, neither machine translation nor human translation are error-free. They often require human and financial resources that not everyone can access, even more so in a multilingual context, when the possible language combinations grow enormously and add to the possibility of error.

In addition, in many situations translation and interpretation, even the best, cannot replace the directness, speed, confidentiality and emotionality of direct communication through a common language. So, although translation and interpretation are critically necessary, they are not sufficient to solve the language problems.

⁴ [Translation and multilingualism - Laura Johnson kaj Egor Ovcharenko - UN Today](#);

⁵ [Multilingualism at the UN: an emergency -Jean Fabre -UN Today](#)



Esperanto, the international language as a solution for international language policy

Why we need an international auxiliary language

We want to enable every person in the world to communicate equally through an effective tool with all other people. This is best possible when all people learn the same common international language, in addition to their native language(s), so that **no country or nation should impose its own language on others.**

As mentioned above, several Human Rights are fulfilled linguistically. Therefore, a general advanced knowledge of an international language would have advantages from a Human Rights point of view, because it would enable the guarantee of Human Rights, such as for example being able to provide medical care without the costs, delay and error risk of translation and interpretation. An international language can be a Human Rights enabler.

The use of a neutrally human language as an international language would also avoid strengthening the linguistic inequality caused by the use of national languages internationally. This solution would contribute to more equality between the cultures that these languages convey, and above all between their speakers, who would otherwise have more access to information and opportunities through their native languages, due to the dominance of no national language.

In relation to international language policy, we believe that Esperanto is the most serious, appropriate and fair candidate to act as an international auxiliary language. It is the most suitable common language for internal communication and writing in international organizations, for international trade, for academic cooperation and for diplomatic relations between countries that do not have a common language. In addition, it can act as a bridge language for translation and interpretation, so that most citizens have access to information in their native language, as much as possible without multi-step mediation.

In addition to its role in large institutional contexts, Esperanto, through its accessibility, should also be a means of understanding for more everyday dealings, such as tourism, travel or cultural exchanges. Where language policy includes compulsory learning of a foreign language, we prefer to see Esperanto in that place than any national language.

Esperanto is both a solution and a solvent in international relations, which fulfills Human Rights.



The suitability of Esperanto

A (trans)culturally rich language

Esperanto is by no means an experimental language, but already fully functional and usable language, as a result of more than 135 years of developmental practice and usage. The language has a rich original and translated literature and technical glossaries in various fields (e.g. commercial, mathematical or railway). Also, new books on various subjects, both original and translated, are regularly published.

There are several radio programs, magazines, podcasts, video channels, blogs and news portals, both official ones of Esperanto organizations and of independent entities. The language itself, and also Esperantology, are taught in several universities and schools, some courses are even provided in Esperanto.

Esperanto is also an officially regulated language, just like several national ones. Since 1905, the Academy of Esperanto guides and polishes the use of the language in response to the needs of the speakers and the social developments. Additionally, the language has a reference monolingual dictionary ([Full Illustrated Dictionary of Esperanto - PIV](#)) and it is possible to officially prove the knowledge of the language through language exams in the levels from B1 to C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Esperanto aims to serve humanity as a neutral means of communication. It does not in itself carry a national or tribal culture, although a specific Esperanto culture has been growing for more than a century since its publication in 1887. The culture of Esperanto is transnational, a transcultural set of cultures which is enriched by national cultures and gives a better overview of them, enabling a new creation. Thus it is a bridge between cultures.

Larger scale international communication can cause a slow approach of existing cultures. That would happen in the same way using any language for international communication. The difference is that when English serves as an international language, the English-speaking cultures (mainly, but not only, the British and American cultures) more easily influence other cultures than the other way around. They do not create an exchange of cultures, but only export their culture as a finished product.⁶⁷ In order to protect other cultures, the self-valuation of all nations, peoples and tribes should be supported. This is more easily possible in a language system based on the principle of equality and not on the dominance of an arbitrarily chosen language.

The role of Esperanto is that of an international auxiliary language between people with different native languages, from the individual to the supranational level, possibly within multilingual countries and societies.

⁶ [Index of Translations - UNESCO](#)

⁷ [Movie Languages - The Numbers](#)



Structurally appropriate language

Esperanto is a language that from the beginning was invented to act as an international auxiliary language. It has a grammar that is easy to learn and applies some tactics to limit the amount of basic words to be learned, enhancing the power of expression. Its pronunciation standards are in practice quite permissive and welcome accent diversity.

Esperanto is often criticized for the fact that its vocabulary is mainly based on the Indo-European languages, especially Latin and Germanic languages. First, one should be aware that this vast language family is spoken on all continents. Many of these languages have a particular lexical unity due to their Latin heritage. It should be noted that some originally Western European languages have more native speakers outside Europe and, therefore, cannot be considered only as European. It is the same with Spanish, Portuguese and English in America. There, they became fully local American languages.

Outside Indo-European languages, within the same continent or country it is very often possible to meet a huge dictionary difference between one's language and those of the neighbors of another language family, which often would not be greater than the dictionary difference between one's own language and Esperanto. In addition, some features of Esperanto, such as its agglutinability, are much more common in other language families than Indo-European.

More importantly, the grammar of Esperanto, based on regularity and word combinability, in addition to its compatible and simple orthography and pronunciation, reflects linguistic principles that often exist in a wide variety of national languages and are universally accessible to human linguistics, but rarely found in any national language. So, although it cannot be denied that Esperanto is especially easy for speakers of Indo-European languages, it is also very accessible to speakers of any language. That is why TEJO claims that, compared to the current situation with English proficiency, **the disparity would clearly decrease due to a wider use of Esperanto and the efficiency would increase.**



Language diversity and linguistic minorities: domestic and regional language policy

Linguistic diversity as a cultural treasure

Valorization of linguistic diversity and multilingualism

TEJO supports and strives for the protection and valorization of linguistic diversity. Linguistic diversity is not only about the number of languages spoken in one territory, but also about the state and vitality of those languages and their speakers. TEJO supports the use and teaching of all spoken, written or sign languages, and social and economic activities aiming at linguistic diversity.

We support equal language rights of all people and language communities. National minorities should have the right to use their minority language in all fields within the historical territories of the minority. Learning the local language, whether minority or not, for new residents is highly recommended and to be supported by local bodies, among other things to help the integration of all newcomers into the existing society. This is possible to eventually compensate for the main language privilege of native speakers of the majority language.

TEJO also acknowledges the special value of sign languages. We support that everyone (including deaf, voiceless and not voiceless people) learns them, so they embrace everyone's means of communication.

Why value linguistic diversity?

Beyond the respect of the linguistic human rights of the speakers, TEJO values linguistic diversity for four main reasons:

- Linguistic diversity and respect for cultural identity: linguistic diversity is often linked to cultural diversity. TEJO supports the Human Right to cultural identity, and specifically the rights of minorities whose languages and cultures are endangered.
- Cultural heritage: languages are a pillar of cultural diversity and through them literature is expressed (vocal and written), but also traditions, collective memories, ways of expression and ways of thinking.
- Personal and collective multilingualism as language policy goals: personal and collective multilingualism enables people to access various language communities, knowledge and opportunities, to communicate more easily in various parts of the world, and also has cognitive benefits for individuals.⁸
- Scientific value of linguistic diversity: linguistic diversity has value for scientific progress, especially in linguistics (indeed, the disappearance of

⁸ [The Cognitive Benefits of Being Bilingual - Viorica Marian kaj Anthony Shook - Cerebrum](#)



most of the field of study would irreparably limit knowledge about the linguistic phenomenon), but also from other scientific branches, because some local languages contain knowledge of localities⁹. That, for example, is the case of knowledge of medicinal plants that are only found in one or a handful of indigenous languages in America or New Guinea¹⁰.

Linguistic discriminations and language phobia

Language is an essential part of human identity and cultural heritage, and necessary to social interaction. Raising awareness and drawing attention to language discrimination is one of TEJO's core goals. Linguistic discrimination, a.k.a. "language phobia" means that people are discriminated against on the basis of the language(s) they speak, or on the basis of their manner of speaking (such as accent, dialect or linguistic feature).

Language phobia and accent phobia are worthy of attention and combat. We should also point out that the often underlined difference between "language" and "dialect" is more political than linguistic: behind that distinction is often hidden the will to rank languages differently, favored by history and consequently the tribes or groups that speak them.

The key to the continuation of a minority language is valorization of this language, whether through economic, identity, cultural or educational means(s).

An ideal domestic language policy in education

Taking into account the principles already mentioned, TEJO proposes the following template as a policy for language policy, adaptable according to the context, traditions and goals of the relevant population, so that in the learning program of each school there is core multilingualism:

- Local language(s), either in common standardized form, or in the local variant: so that they continue to be spoken every day in all kinds of public and private contexts in the relevant territory.
- Nationwide or regional (if different from the local) language(s): to facilitate nationwide or regional connection.
- Esperanto: as a propaedeutic and international language.
- Additional optional languages, such as foreign languages: any languages of choice, with particular attention to neighboring languages and other languages of the country (indigenous, sign languages, classical or languages of immigrants).

⁹ [Language extinction triggers the loss of unique medicinal knowledge - Rodrigo Cámara-Leret kaj Jordi Bascompte - PNAS](#)

¹⁰ [Alfred Kik, Martin Adamec, Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald Kaj Vojtech Novotny - PNAS](#)



It is worth mentioning that it is much easier to learn to understand than to speak another language. Thus, basic level teaching of nearby languages is particularly encouraged, as a way to strive for passive multilingualism that enables mutual understanding in one's own language.

Regarding the language of instruction, TEJO strongly advocates that general teaching should take place at least partially in the local language. This ensures the transmission of the language and supports linguistic diversity. It facilitates teaching with an immediately understandable language and that the language can work as a link between all children, regardless of family origin, and not a way to separate people according to language group from the earliest age. We also support higher education to be as accessible as possible in the languages of the relevant territory. We also support internationalization of higher education through programs that include learning in the local or national languages, and teaching them to non-local students.

In short, language teaching must be framed in a fair and effective language policy aiming to fulfill the linguistic rights of the territorial inhabitants, valuing linguistic diversity and facilitating communication with neighboring communities and with the whole world.



Esperanto as a community and its added contained value for civil society

The socio-political role of Esperanto community

We, the Esperantist community, are a global (multi)lingual community. Since 1887, we have united people from different linguistic, cultural and geographical backgrounds, with the aim of improving the world in various ways, but always by giving a common language to humanity.

Because of their ideals, Esperantists were often persecuted, especially by dictatorships. This kind of threat can always return anywhere where chauvinism, aggression and nationalism undermine the value of getting along with people from different backgrounds, in favor of national isolation, which excludes people and experiences.

However, Esperanto is often looked down upon and considered a useless or failed project due to its "Final Victory", success as everyone's second language, has clearly not materialized until now. This is obviously correct, but in no way devalues our language and the interest of its community.

The Esperanto community has been able to do a lot, and is able to organize, create and collaborate on its field. Every year, due to Esperanto, there are events in different continents, various works of art (literature and original and translated, theater, films, music and others), facilitated voyages, new encounters, discoveries, friendship between different people and even marriages. That in itself, according to many, is a kind of victory, even if not the long-awaited one, it shows the **value of learning and using Esperanto**.

We want to see Esperanto more extensively used within international institutions, trade and exchanges and, thus, more widely taught. At the same time, we also aim for the recognition of the value of our community and movement. As well as other types of movements, TEJO aims for Esperanto to be famously known with a positive, reliable and prestigious image. In this way, it will be widely known that through Esperanto one learns, is educated, becomes capable, becomes enlightened and contributes to the creation of a better world.

By the way, Esperantists do not only care about language problems and Esperanto-language creations. They also more generally aim to improve our world and are active in other fields and movements. For example democracy, sustainability, transnational education, accessibility, human emancipation, peacebuilding and gender equality.

Thus, we prove that Esperanto is **an international tool for solving global problems**, and that's how we present it to the rest of the world.



Esperanto: a separate but not superior language

Additionally, we acknowledge the particular history, role, function and purpose of Esperanto as a language. Just as we demand the respect and recognition of all languages and language speakers by everyone, we also want that for Esperanto and Esperantists.

Therefore, we underline that, despite the uniqueness and qualities of the language expressed in this document, we consider it equal in value to other languages, and do not intend to make other languages disappear. We affirm the respectability of the choice to speak the International Language, the value of Esperanto as a means of communication and that cultural items, educational materials and projects in Esperanto have no more or less value and intrinsic dignity than what happens in another language. More than 40 years after the [Manifesto of Raum](#), we believe that the Esperantists are actually able to say "*something culturally original and internationally valuable*".

It should be specified that TEJO does not aim at the recognition of Esperanto as a language of ethnic minority. The treatment of Esperanto as a minority language or as if Esperantists were an ethnic minority could strengthen the connections within the existing Esperanto community (in which, not all Esperantists participate to the same extent), but would give the impression of a certain degree of closure. Mainly, that is inconsistent with the goal that Esperanto becomes a generally used and accessible language.



Conclusion

TEJO, considering its values on the one hand, and the internationally recognized Human Rights on the other, recognizes the full dignity of all languages and cultures, and supports the equal rights of all language communities.

In a multilingual world, at least one common language is needed to facilitate all kinds of spiritual and material relationships between people. Even Human Rights, such as they are recognized by the United Nations and many international bodies, are also fulfilled in language: therefore, language barriers lead to disrespect of Human Rights.

However, choosing an ethnic national language as an international language is an arbitrary source of injustice that gives a major privilege to native speakers of the hegemonic language, currently English. Moreover, this creates inefficiency and erects walls to the smooth, sustainable, balanced progress of humanity.

TEJO thinks Esperanto is the most suitable candidate for the role of international auxiliary language, due to its facilitating regularity, history that proves continuing multidisciplinary practice and use for more than 135 years, and for that kind of transnational culture.

We advocate that language barriers should no longer prevent the respect of Human Rights, that everyone recognizes the equality of all people and, therefore, of their languages and their cultures, and that there is an open society in which all people can successfully and equally communicate internationally. TEJO affirms that this is a Human Right - more precisely, that **international language is a right of humanity and that Esperanto is its enabler.**



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