

Prof. Rego

The Esperanto Project: Joining the Conversation, Supporting a Claim

In the period between the late 1870's and 1885, a young Polish medical student by the name of L.L. Zamenhof created a language which he hoped would become universal, thus promoting intercultural understanding and conflict resolution worldwide. This language came to be known as Esperanto, and it is believed to be spoken by approximately 2 million people today. While some nations have actively supported the dissemination of Esperanto, others have violently repressed it – a number of people have reportedly been executed for speaking and/or teaching the language. Although some would say that Zamenhof's project of a common international language failed, others would point to a vibrant and thriving network of Esperanto speakers in the world today. You can find several Esperanto-related groups, associations, and even language tutorials online. See <http://192.220.96.203/efaq.html#what> for an overview (or you can Google "An Esperanto Overview") of the language and the movement associated with it.

Your assignment is to discuss an aspect of the Esperanto project in light of the readings you have done so far for our course. Again, do not feel like you have to cite every text or cover every aspect of the issue. Choose something you can discuss effectively in a 2-to 3-page paper. Use only the readings that are useful to you in articulating and supporting your claim. You do not need to be "all for" or "totally against" the idea of a common language. The point of the assignment is to enter into a dialogue with the ideas introduced by the authors in order to make sense of some facet of Zamenhof's project. For example, you may explore Edward Hall's concept of "high-context" and "low-context" communication, or Whorf's claim regarding the relationship between language and perception, or Clifford's idea of "Traveling Cultures" to shed light on Zamenhof's hopes for the language, or on Esperanto's perceived "failure" or relative "success," its political implications, etc.

Be creative and have fun!

DUE MONDAY, February 16, 11:59 PM. Volunteers wanted.