

10th Linguapax Congress

DIALOGUE ON LANGUAGE DIVERSITY, SUSTAINABILITY AND PEACE

Communication proposal for the workshop:

e. Agents in favour of language diversity (NGO, IGO, civil society organizations)

Title:

A SYSTEM OF WEB-BASED PROJECTS SUSTAINING THE LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

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Abstract:

The global linguistic system in its evolution between the opposing poles of many isolated language communities or a single world language should be established as a sustainable interlingual world displaying those properties:

- **Diversity** – all languages of the world would thrive in it.
- **Integration** – people would communicate and cooperate across language boundaries.
- **Equity** – opportunities and rights would not depend on a person's native language.
- **Efficiency** – powerful, rapid, and low-cost language-manipulation tools would be available.
- **Sustainability** – solutions to language problems would be long-term.

Some authors identified five possible pathways towards an interlingual world:

- **Language Brokers** – the current official model in some international organisations and national governments with professional translators and interpreters
- **Technologism** – automatic translation based on computer technology
- **World English** as a "second native language," supported by the global economic and cultural dominance of the United States
- **Esperantism** – an invented auxiliary language (not necessarily Esperanto itself), designed as a global auxiliary language in which fluency can be achieved at low cost
- **Plurilingualism** – multilingual competence of each participant in translingual communication.

Each of these models has its advantages and positive achievements. However, none of them can as yet be accepted as the universal solution to the communication needs of a multilingual world, because of their obvious limitations.

This paper presents three projects aimed at supporting an interlingual world. They are implemented as multilingual web-sites approaching to different aspects of the plurilingualism. The first of them, called Lingva Prismo, is showing the colourfulness and diversity of the world's languages. It is to improve the awareness of language heritage and to contribute to preserve this cultural richness. Some entertainment features for the visitors are added too such as stories and personal interlingual experiences, quizzes and so on. It is a service for exploring the wonderful world of languages and the ways of international communication.

The second of these projects, called "lernu!" is a virtual language school that provides various facilities for easy language learning in the style "smile and learn". Hyper courses, virtual lessons, on line vocabulary, forums, language exercises and games, quiz and on line tests are some of its features. A network of facilitators has been established all over the world in order to help the students and to follow their progress.

The project entitled Interkulturo, as the third in the system, is aimed at intercultural education through language learning. It brings together young people from different countries and backgrounds all over the world in a distributed virtual school as an environment for creative and collaborative learning based on both face-to-face and distance facilities. A kind of cross-cultural network is supported by a website where participants within the same age group (classes from primary and secondary schools) co-operate by using the same language. This enables them to practise the language they are studying and simultaneously to broaden their cultural horizons. They exchange materials, information and opinions on an agreed set of topics in order to understand each other's culture, learn about other languages, cultures and ways of living, make mutual comparisons, discover similarities and understand differences, outgrow a self-centered outlook on life, develop research skills, and present conclusions after the exchange. With four years of practical experience, the project team is at present constructing a new multilingual web shell to support teaching and learning methods developed within the project. A network of facilitators is established and regional teacher training courses are organized.

These projects are carried out by NGOs ILEI (International League of Esperanto-Speaking Teachers) and TEJO (World Esperanto Youth Organisation) with participation of Hesselbom Berlin GmbH and support of the European Youth Foundation, Nordic Cultural Foundation, Esperantic Studies Foundation and some other institutions.

Author's background:

Radojica Petrović is a teacher on ICT and teaching methods at the University of Kragujevac, Serbia and Montenegro. His research fields are the educational quality management system and application of ICT to language learning and intercultural education. He is the President of ILEI (International League of Esperanto-Speaking Teachers) and project leader of Interkulturo – the ILEI's web based project of intercultural education through language learning.

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