



Research Proposal - Local Internationalists? Scotland's connections to the global world of Esperanto, c.1890-1920

Administrative details

St Andrews-based and supervisor-defined

Supervisor: Dr Bernhard Struck from the School of History

Research Proposal

In the early 1900s, thousands of women joined the Esperanto movement. Many photographs of local Scottish Esperanto groups reveal up to 50% women participation. Still, women's role in Esperanto has been mostly overlooked by scholars thus far. In this research project, I will track patterns of women Esperantists in Scotland and the Midlands by utilizing postcards, letters, photographs, newspapers, Esperanto journals, and other primary sources from archives and libraries. I will ask the following questions about gender dynamics related to Esperanto in this region around 1900: Why did women become Esperantists? Why were there more women than men Esperantists in some areas? What aspirations did these women have? Did women attend more global congresses and transnational Esperanto events than men? How did the Esperanto movement overlap with other social movements at the time such as women's suffrage? These findings, as well as circumstances surrounding the conclusions, will be presented digitally in blog posts, charts, and essays on the university's Esperanto and Internationalism webpage and other publicly accessible digital media. Spotlighting gender dynamics related to Esperanto in this region allows for analysis of how the language either enforced or broke down gender norms usually associated with early twentieth-century Europe. Studying a language that was constructed to be understood by people everywhere in the world is metaphorically significant in the aftermath of Brexit. Personally, this project will unite my academic passions as an English and Modern History student by focusing on the intersection of linguistics, gender studies, and transnational history. This project will also begin bridging gaps in Esperanto scholarship as a plethora of research focused on Zamenhof, the founder of Esperanto, and Stalin's persecution of Esperantists already exists, while there is little research about Scotland's and England's, much less women's, early involvement in Esperanto.

In a lockdown situation, I would begin my research by exploring digitalized Esperanto documents from the Department of Planned Languages of the Vienna State Library. This site includes downloadable versions of Esperanto World Congresses resources such as lists of names

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of those who attended such congresses across Europe. The site also holds published Esperanto journals sorted by region and would therefore supply a lockdown-friendly starting point from which I could track geographic locations of Esperanto speakers and then complete in-depth analysis to answer my research questions accordingly. Additionally, I am prepared to make use of archives and institutions which have academic connections and physical proximity to St Andrews such as in Edinburgh and Dundee. I am also prepared to personally reach out to the National Library of Scotland and other Scottish institutions about retrieving digital versions of Esperanto documents outlined on their website in order to gather necessary sources.