

THE LINGUISTIC RIGHTS OF THE ELDERLY: A CHECKLIST FOR REFLECTION/ RESEARCH

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Dedicated to David Crystal, a long-cherished friend, inspirer of this senior author

Did you know that the elderly have linguistic rights that when implemented can be communicative highlights?

The open, exploratory checklist provided below is for you/your family/your community in communicative dignity to grow

If these linguistic rights you decide to apply ask how the elderly near you will benefit and answer why

Global citizens please show that for such rights you committedly care

All Third Age initiatives please also show how linguistically you can dare

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THE ELDERLY SHOULD/COULD HAVE THE LINGUISTIC RIGHT

1. To be protected against ageism (from being discriminated against, offended, ridiculed, etc.)
2. To be treated/referred to with dignity and respect in varied contexts, especially in one's home, public places and transportation systems
3. To ask interlocutors to repeat what they've said, especially when the older person has difficulties in understanding the message (e.g. on trains, in crowded restaurants, airports, etc.)
4. To be given patience when having to repeat oneself because of a neurolinguistic disorder.
5. To enjoy communicative interaction in places like senior citizen homes or clinics, thus avoiding linguistic isolation
6. An older person should have the linguistic right to a professionally trained interpreter who speaks the person's language when the person who has limited local language proficiency is being tried in court.
7. From the local community's public health services, to receive an appropriate hearing aid, when the person can't afford it. Also to receive assistance for any form of sensory or physical handicap such as with vision or wheelchair, in cases which impact on the elderly's language-using abilities.
8. To take language learning or language proficiency improvement courses/workshops/seminars -- both live or line -- while living in senior citizen homes or clinics for the elderly
9. To have intellectual stimulation of all kinds, especially one's linguistic creativity encouraged, enhanced. Supported (in speech, writing and signing) through whatever facilities are locally available.
10. In public discussions on freedom of expression, to exercise the right to advocate the linguistic right of older persons, especially through the Internet, the Media, etc.
11. To receive medical explanation/guidance in understandable language from doctors, nurses and other health professionals.