Language and Peace: Using Global Issues in the English Language Classroom to Create a More Sustainable Dialogue

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Abstract

In the current times of increased conflict and political instability, there is now an urgent need for peaceful solutions. The Language of Peace Approach (LPA, Oxford et al., this volume) utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the connection between peace and language and has sought to aid students in creating more sustainable dialogues. This paper seeks to further explore the relationship between peace and language by sharing successful pedagogical practices drawing on and incoporating the LPA. Student interview and survey data from activities in class were studied by thematic analysis. The authors propose that the integration of the LPA and global issues education is a natural fit for the second language classroom, particularly those in which global citizenship and critical thinking are actively promoted.

Keywords: Language of peace approach, peace education

Introduction

In the challenging 21st century political and social climate, constant emphasis on division and differences threatens our belief in the potential and benefits of diversity. Social media status updates and Tweets of only 280 characters have the potential to cause widespread anger, fear, frustration, and discrimination very quickly, and with minimal effort or expense. For example, in May 2018, celebrity Roseanne Barr posted a Tweet comparing a former adviser to President Obama, Valerie Jarrett, to an ape, "If the muslim brotherhood & planet of the apes had a baby=vj." Barr's racist remarks on social media ultimately resulted in her own firing along with the cancellation of her show. At times, it seems that incendiary words posted on social media are the new bullets, and other speech elements including tone, delivery, and reference can be weaponized to target specific groups.

Not only what we say, but how we say it, has consequences and implications for different people. With the rise of so-called 'fake news', racism, and xenophobia in the American press, and the press in other countries as well, we have seen the power of words and language to break down instead of to build up, to divide instead of to unite. As language educators, we are communication specialists at the front lines of how students use their words and engage in dialogue to achieve certain communicative outcomes. As Kruger (2012) suggests, we also believe TESOL educators should be doing more to promote peaceful foreign language classroom communities. As Kruger put it: "As communication specialists… TESOL professionals should be at the forefront of promoting peaceful interaction" (p. 17).

The LPA seeks to equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in the unstable environments of today. One of LPA's essential tools is learning effective communication techniques to avoid conflict and express emotions. Often, in order to avoid misunderstanding, communicators must rely on their self-awareness of their own identity as well as the background of 'the Other' in order to anticipate unintended confusion or offense. To practice and observe this in the language classroom, we can benefit from LPA studies by giving students the tools to analyze their own discourse, dialogues, and conversations. The natural pairing of language education and the LPA makes sense as both fields share the common purpose of communicating more peaceably and sustainably.

In this article, we first address the fields of TESOL and Peace Education (PE) separately and then comment on the contribution and value of studying them together within the LPA. Using this perspective, we explore the relationships between peace and language by sharing successful pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning using the LPA in a university EFL global issues education classroom. We seek to answer the question: How can we use the LPA to teach and learn to communicate more sustainably? The authors propose that the integration of the LPA and global issues education is a natural fit for the second language classroom, particularly in those classrooms that promote critical thinking as well as global citizenship.

Literature Review

TESOL in a Globalized World

As this century progresses, the need to re-envision education grows clearer. There are calls for the incorporation of specific 21st century skills such as the rapid acquisition of knowledge and the application of "problem solving, communication, teamwork, technology use, [and] innovation" to every task presenting itself to learners (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 10-11). These skills overlap with the demands of globalization and global citizenship as we find ourselves inextricably linked to each other across the world, whether we are ready to accept that connectedness or not (Gaudelli, 2011). Cates (1999) believes that "English language teachers are in a unique position to promote the ideal of world citizenship through their work" as it is a means of creating cross-cultural understanding. We believe that both language education and PE play important roles in moving beyond surface-level understanding and towards a deeper commitment to global citizenship.

An important skill that links global education with PE is critical thinking (Ingram & O'Neill, 1999). Like global issues classrooms, PE classrooms are a natural and logical place to practice critical thinking as they offer in themselves connections to different perspectives, cultures, and lifestyles. These classrooms are "most immediately concerned with cross-cultural communication" and one should consider the goals and methods of PE classrooms carefully to address the urgent need for creating sustainable dialogues (Ingram & O'Neill, 1999, p. 30). One thing language educators can do to promote the theme of world peace in their classrooms is to model productive conflict resolution and mediation behavior while teaching their students how to reproduce it. Chetkow-Yanoov (1996) affirms that conflict resolution skills can indeed be taught and he shares problem-solving activities, from the playground to graduate courses requiring complex and critical thinking to negotiate conflicts. Johnson and Johnson (2009) show that a positive approach to controversy in the classroom can open doors to teaching and practicing how to synthesize and create novel solutions by working together through discussion. Similarly, Martinez and Niño (2013) advocate tasks in the target language that stimulate reflection and problem solving regarding social concerns. They found that the use of these types of tasks in the classroom promotes critical thinking behavior in students. In order for such activities to be successful, however, a safe space is crit-

ical, because "instead of focusing on the commonly held assumption that we are safe when everyone agrees, [we then] open up the possibility that we can be safe even in situations where there is disagreement and even conflict," (hooks, 2010, p. 87). Furthermore, by "teaching our students that there is safety in learning to cope with conflict, with differences of thought and opinion, we prepare their minds for radical openness...we prepare them to face reality," (hooks, 2010, p. 88). The LPA is especially well-suited to achieving this preparation.

Global Education & Critical Thinking

A fundamental part of global education is thinking deeply about the issues one is presented with. Such critical thinking, according to Brookfield (1987), "forces us to consider our own relationship to [an issue] and how we personally fit into [its] context" [as cited in Halvorsen, 2005]. Halvorsen (2005) himself explains this as "consider[ing] issue[s] from various perspectives, to look at and challenge any possible assumptions that may underlie the issue and to explore its possible alternatives." bell hooks (2010) would likely agree, but believes it takes time, as students must first learn to embrace and enjoy the power of thinking. She believes this can be achieved through engaged pedagogy, "a teaching strategy that aims to restore students' will to think, and their will to be fully self-actualized," (hooks, 2010, p. 8). As this requires exploration of identity and thoughtful use of language, the pedagogical application within the LPA is clear.

Utilizing such pedagogy can occur naturally in a classroom teaching a second language alongside the teaching of the language of peace, while achieving many more common teaching goals and objectives. Bloom's revised taxonomy delineates between lower order (remembering, understanding, applying) and higher order (analyzing, evaluating, creating) thinking skills which can be used as scaffolding for discussion questions within activities (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). When exploring global topics, debates and role plays can be particularly effective since they, "enable students to retain more information and gain a better understanding of abstract concepts than lectures and note-taking" (Raymond & Sorensen, 2008, p. 4). That deeper connection to the issues promotes critical thinking while requiring students to use more precise language in discussions and ensuring proper reflection of the role they have temporarily adopted. Critical media analysis or problem solving similarly encourage thoughtful discussion and careful consider-

ation of a multitude of opinions. Again, imprecise language can create misunderstanding as easily as clear language can allow students to delve deeper (Halvorsen, 2005). Establishing a high bar for students to develop critical thinking also creates a cohesive, meaningful learning environment where students feel comfortable taking risks. Engaging students in thinking critically creates the kind of environment suitable for the challenging topics that Peace Language approaches require.

Peace Education and Critical Thinking

Since World War II, the United Nations, national governments, and civil society have promoted the ambitious ideal that education can give people the "knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values" to prevent and resolve conflict and promote peace at all levels (Fountain, 1999, p.1). The earliest forms of PE focused on intercultural understanding as the foundation of peace (Harris, 2004). Proponents of PE believed that "an understanding of others and shared values would overcome hostilities that lead to conflict" (Harris, 2004, p. 9). With the majority of post-Cold War conflicts happening along ethnic or religious lines, PE has continued to focus on building understanding and acceptance of other cultures and peoples and the prevention of conflict (Huntington, 2011; Abu-Nimer, & Smith, 2016).

In the classroom, PE strives to create a safe, cohesive community where students feel comfortable sharing their opinions, taking risks, and engaging in dialogues about sensitive issues. The need for critical thinking skills in PE is apparent not only for the complex topics raised but also because of the necessity of engagement, commitment, and contribution from all members of the classroom in the discussion. Indeed, according to bell hooks:

"The most exciting aspect of critical thinking in the classroom is that it calls for initiative from everyone, actively inviting all students to think passionately and to share ideas in a passionate, open manner. When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognize that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful. In such a community of learning, there is no failure…. we leave the classroom knowing that critical thinking empowers us" (hooks, 2010, p. 11). A critically thinking classroom requires that all students are motivated and feel safe to opt in as this engagement is crucial to achieve what PE is trying to do. Similarly, they should feel

safe enough to express a desire to opt out when they are uncomfortable sharing on a particular subject.

The Language of Peace Approach and Peace Linguistics

In researching language classrooms that utilize themes of PE approaches and global issues to promote sustainable dialogue, the relatively new field of Peace Linguistics is emerging as a useful approach for further development. For a leader in the field of Peace Linguistics, Gomes de Matos, the difference between Peace Education and Peace Linguistics is that Peace Education is "communicating about peace" and Peace Linguistics is "communicating peacefully, constructively and humanizingly" (2000, p. 339). However, in his version of Peace Linguistics there is little systematic, in-depth analysis of language as it is being used. Through studying peace using the LPA, we focus on not only what is being said but how and why it is being said. According to Gomes de Matos: "Linguistic Peace Education aims to positively impact human relations through awareness and engagement… teaching assertive communication skills helps to break the typical passive aggressive cycle" (2000, p. 339). Increasing our students' awareness of how their identity influences their language, and how their language shapes a dialogue, widens the students' capacity to anticipate misunderstanding, empathize with the listener, and communicate constructively rather than destructively. Van Dijk et. al. (1995) reminds us that all elements of language can be manipulated for a certain purpose, either positively or negatively. Syntax can show power and exclusivity through the use of the passive or active voice, lexicon can express and persuade by deliberate language choice targeting certain groups, and local semantics allow us to choose what is made implicit or explicit to specific audiences. One particularly relevant example of manipulating lexicon during wartime in order to maintain a positive image of our military and weapons is by using terms like "smart bombs" and "surgical strikes" compared to referring to the enemy as the "Evil Empire" or "terrorists" (Van Dijk et. al., 1995, p. 26). Becoming aware of how we can manipulate the structures and functions of language to achieve a certain end is crucial in the context of studying peace, because a breakdown in communication due to a misunderstanding of discourse is often where conflict begins.

Although the connection between PE and linguistics appears to be a natural fit, the two fields have only recently been linked. In exploring this gap, Curtis

(2017) proposes some reasons for the lack of interdisciplinary research. One reason he suggests is the "compartmentalization of knowledge on which academic institutions are built" (p. 23) which means that researchers prefer to stay in their specialized area of study instead of collaborating with others who work in areas outside of their field of expertise (Curtis, 2017). Another possible reason for the delayed development of Peace Linguistics as a specialized field is because it has not been systematized into a theoretical model. That delay might be due to the fact that the inherently interdisciplinary nature of Peace Linguistics makes ownership difficult, or it might be because peace is more practical and less theoretical, which makes creating a theoretical model problematic (Curtis, 2017). Whatever the reason for the disconnect, it is hard to argue against the need for the fields of the LPA and Peace Linguistics, both of which could offer new insights and solutions to the growing conflict in our world today.

Having briefly considered the LPA and Peace Linguistics approaches, the question arises as to how to teach and promote peace in the English language classroom. One way is to focus on learners' ability to use language effectively. "If TESOL is concerned with providing learners with the necessary skills to communicate successfully with others, introducing aspects of Peace Education into the curriculum could promote peaceful communication" (Kruger, 2012, p. 22). Working with students to focus on our collective responsibility to communicate is critical for sustainable dialogues because words are so integral to our identity and to our dignity. The task before us is daunting because language is so connected to who we are and what we do that we can sometimes forget just how powerful language can be. We find it hard to apologize and fail to "recognize situations in which language, if used constructively could avoid serious conflict at the personal micro level and the global macro level" (Friedrich & Gomes de Matos, 2009, p. 20).

Friedrich and Gomes de Matos offer some practical activities that language teachers can use to promote the practice of peaceful discourse including asking students how we can "humanize a person linguistically" simply by using labels with positive connotations for our counterparts such as "peacebuilder, expert, mentor, patriot, role model etc" (Friedrich & Gomes de Matos, 2009, p. 24-26). They also encourage learners to write entries for a "dictionary of encouragement and praise", and "creating practical, transforming communicative alternatives such as turning an intended threat into a thought-provoking text or turning an intended intimidation

into an invitation" (Friedrich & Gomes de Matos, 2009, p. 24-26). When using role plays, debates, and negotiation in the classroom, Friedrich and Gomes de Matos (2009) encourage "avoidance of dehumanizing language, investment in handling differences constructively, emphasis on language with a potential for peace rather than language employed with a strategic agenda, focus on agreement rather than on polemics and avoidance of pompous language used to separate and hide" (p. 26). Gomes de Matos (2014) suggests several ways to accomplish these goals in the classroom. One example he gives is encouraging the teacher to ask reflective questions such as, "How can my language students express their communicative dignity in speaking, writing or signing? How can they nurture compassion communicatively?" (p. 4). A second suggestion he gives is through alliterations which can serve as memory-jogging tools for applying the ideas of Peace Language to their own communication, for example, "AAA = Apologize right after Addressing a person Aggressively and BBB = Build Bridges for a Better world" (Gomes de Matos, 2014, p. 4). Finally, Friedrich and Gomes de Matos highlight the position of the teacher as a powerful role model and example to the class by displaying "positive language in the classroom, modeling consistent nonviolent communication and position[ing] classroom differences as a positive" (2009, p. 26).

Context & Practices

The materials used in the course described in this paper are the product of six to eight years of careful refinement in various second language classrooms. They have been modified for student levels as necessary or adapted to better fit changing course goals and structures. Despite this, the core remains the same – the use of role plays, scenarios, and negotiation as a method of helping students understand complex global issues while developing language and critical thinking skills.

The particular iteration of the course, from which this work's primary research data was gathered, was taught at a Japanese liberal arts university, in which the content was introduced in a research writing course that had global issues as its area of inquiry. The goal of the course was to instruct students how to develop secondary research skills and write research papers of approximately 2,000 words in length while deepening their knowledge on a self-selected topic. The course met three to four times a week for 70 minutes, though typically one of the four scheduled days was used exclusively for one-on-one tutorials between the student and instructor.

This course had been taught three previous times at this particular Japanese liberal arts university; however, a unique relationship between the two authors in 2015-2016 made this current research paper possible. One researcher (Researcher A), taught the described course over one ten-week term in late 2016, while the other (Researcher B), observed her teaching as a part of her MA thesis research on the reflection of global issues and Peace Education in second language classrooms. This current paper springboards off of Researcher B's primary data and findings, looking in particular, for evidence of student reflection on identity, or the importance of specific language use in classroom activities in creating more peaceful and constructive dialogues. In addition to class observation, Researchers A and B met throughout the term to discuss planned activities, student progress/concerns, and Researcher B was invited to help develop activities and materials. Additionally, she was responsible for giving a guest lecture on women's education in Africa and inviting guest speakers with expertise on women's issues globally.

The relevant data for this paper involved observational notes, student reflection journals, survey responses, and student interview transcripts (see Appendices A and B). Student reflection journals were typically assigned after discussion of a controversial topic in class or after a guest speaker, and in their responses, students were encouraged to express their reaction to and opinion on what they heard and to include examples to support their ideas. Student data were coded for student reflection on how they believed their experience in the class could contribute to a more peaceful world, and for this paper that student data was further separated and analyzed in relation to student identity, language, and critical thinking. The data were organized using thematic analysis (narrative inquiry), using those three areas as predetermined categories for evaluation, though some non-narrative analysis is also incorporated to allow for preservation of student voices (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2013). A deeper, non-narrative analysis of the data is beyond the scope of this paper, although worth pursuing to further the develop the field of Peace Language.

Findings & Analysis

Identity

Identity and understanding different perspectives

Throughout the course, students had the opportunity to participate in many pair and group discussions in English about global issues, which gave them the space and time to reflect on and share their own opinions as well as to consider the different ideas of their group members. Many students shared how they considered the group discussions to be valuable because they could be exposed to and try to understand alternative points of view:

Table 1. Student comments on opinion and identity

"This class was a great opportunity to get a different point of view!" (Survey comment)
"Many people have different opinions and I liked listening to them." (Interview)
"This class actually changed my mind when I look at the news. It kind of helped me since I wasn't really sure about religious beliefs and conflicts. I started to understand why it's happening and why it's not being solved yet." (Interview)

The discussions in the course required students to think about their own backgrounds and beliefs and compare them with those of the other group members in a positive and respectful way. One student commented on the collective knowledge of diversity when he realized that other students might be more aware of certain issues than he was:

"Before I entered into college I kinda thought that I have more knowledge than others about global issues… but when I come [here] I realize[d] I don't know and there are so many people who know better… [this university] opened my eyes toward more issues" (Interview prompt: "Do you think this class helped you to become a better global citizen? Why or why not?").

Students' comments also showed evidence of self-awareness of their own identity and reflected on ways in which they needed to grow and adapt when discussing controversial global issues with others.

Table 2. Student reflections on self-evaluation during interviews when asked if they thought the course helped them to become a better global citizen

"I think I need to be more sensitive to biases or presuppositions in my mind." (Interview)
"We discussed religion, conflict resolution, identity and women's rights. The class made me realize how ignorant I was and still am about global issues. Now I know and care about global issues a little more." (Interview)

Observation notes of student discussion show that students had more productive conversations in which every group member could offer up at least one idea if students had a few minutes to individually think about the questions, make notes, or confer briefly with a partner before the longer 15 to 20 minute discussions actually took place.

Another technique that worked well for group discussion that seemed to give students more confidence and depth in their responses, both in terms of English language use and content, was if students were asked to discuss/talk about an assignment they had completed for that day (Observation notes). One student observed, "We need some time to think before we talk. I think that's it because, um, you have to prepare for some comments because we have discussion time. That's the point" (Interview).

In addition to class discussions, a second activity that was frequently mentioned in student surveys, interviews and reflection journals was listening to and interacting with guest speakers. The most commented on guest speaker was an American teacher who worked in Saudi Arabia:

Table 3. Student reflections on guest speakers

"Learning the customs of the Middle East allowed me to have better insight on why people value their styles and the perspective of people depending on different identities like language changed my idea of why they feel they belong to that." (Student reflection journal)
"My idea about education for women in developing countries changed by listening to a story about Saudi Arabia." (Student reflection journal)

With each guest speaker, students listened to their story, had the opportunity to ask questions and then reflected on the experience by writing a journal entry. One student remarked that, "I think guest speakers are useful in understanding the issue more deeply. I think it's good" (Interview prompt: What activity was most useful

for you in understanding the content of the course?"). The chance to listen to a new perspective, to consider the questions posed by fellow students, and to take the time to craft a written response individually gave students the time and the space to understand a different perspective and think about how it related to their own identity, culture and background.

Identity, role-plays, and negotiation

Researcher A modeled and contextualized examples of charged political language from the 2016 U.S. presidential election and helped students develop constructive conversations on religious/cultural conflict, political ideology, and Japanese territorial disputes. Students seemed to feel that stepping into the role of someone with another viewpoint on such controversial issues helped them broaden their understanding of both the topics and why they are so difficult to resolve internationally. Several students particularly valued experiencing how all the perspectives came together, whether or not they led to resolution of the dispute at hand:

Table 4. Student reflections on multiple perspectives

"I liked role play. . . First, I can hear a lot of people's ideas like um some people come up with the idea that I even did not imagine … to create a new organization to own that island, not China or Japan but that organization. . . only one person's brain can create only one people's idea but if we all get together we can have like five or like twenty people's ideas." (Interview - references negotiation of Japan's territorial disputes)
"This class made me think about other people's perspectives more and . . . what other people value. In global issues and what's going on around the world, I didn't really get why people were being stubborn or not giving away their opinions and not listening to other people I guess. It made me realize that there are some things they can't compromise on" (Interview – references activity designed to illustrate Mid-East religious conflict)

Similarly, some students gained appreciation for how people's beliefs and opinions develop and how those beliefs/opinions can influence their actions. They began to understand how subjectivity can complicate perception of other individuals or of their behavior:

Table 5. Student reflections on subjectivity

"I realized the difficulty to negotiate and make an agreement. I also learned each of the groups has their own positions and reasons for their insists [sic]." (Interview)
"My perspective changed on ideology you know. I thought I would be rather liberal, but I somewhat understand what the conservatives think and some points I couldn't deny their opinions. Like I think I just tried to think more objectively from now on. I try to. But that's a hard thing, you know. Sometimes I will be subjective and not even realizing it." (Interview)
"It was interesting to analyze many problems in the world based on the ideology. I hadn't done that before...The other thing is the discussion we are doing right now. We are mediators of the island territory dispute. I used to live in China before at the time when Tokyo nationalized the island and it was a hot topic so ...just tak[ing] a step back and be[ing] a third perspective was really good." (Interview)

As the quotes above indicate, whether students experienced a convergence or divergence of perspectives, the activities were all useful to understanding the dynamics and mechanics of conflict. Developing an appreciation for, and proficiency in, using language peacefully is key, especially when expressing and responding to differences of opinion.

The Importance of Language

Language for expressing emotions and opinion

A significant way that students benefited from focusing on language in this global issues class was the strategies Researcher A shared for expressing emotion and opinion in a constructive, non-threatening way. This was mainly accomplished through modeling; she asked questions when she did not understand, probed students if additional information and examples were needed and was not afraid to respectfully express her disagreement with a student's point of view. "You might have a point but I'm not sure I fully agree; can you explain what you mean in a different way?" (Observation notes).

Using this type of speech as an example and Researcher A as a role model, students were encouraged to be curious and question what they did not understand instead of making assumptions. This kind of free speech environment created a safe community in which students felt supported sharing their emotions and opin-

ions, but were also accountable to each other to ensure it was done in a respectful and responsible way.

Table 6. Student reflections on expression and understanding when asked in interviews what they enjoyed most about the course

"The writing part is enjoyable for me but it may be biased because it's only my opinion but when I discuss with other members we can share other opinions and ideas so yeah it um encouraged me to understand others' views." (Interview)
"It depends on the topic, but I enjoyed the small group discussions especially the review of my essay. It was really nice. I could learn from other person and also I could express what I want to say in my words and through my voice." (Interview)

Through group discussion, especially when reviewing each other's essays, students were able to go beyond sharing and understanding different opinions by using what they learned to incorporate new perspectives into their research papers.

In addition to emphasizing the power of using language for questioning and clarifying information, Researcher A also modeled healthy conflict management strategies. Students were encouraged to be respectful of others' opinions and Researcher A demonstrated that disagreement and differences of opinion could be productive if handled constructively. The Instructor also used language and emotion in a powerful way by providing personal examples of conflict in her life. This modeled honesty and vulnerability through the use of her specific experiences and feelings. This can be a very useful and effective way to deal with sensitive and emotional conversations as group members are only able to react; they cannot disagree with or deny the events and feelings shared.

One powerful example of this was when Researcher A shared with the class the political differences and divide present in her immediate family in the U.S. during the thematic unit on identity and ideology. She commented that the feelings and separation felt at home seemed to mirror that of the country as she perceived it in the media and discussed with the students how trying to understand the other side's point of view, even when we disagree, is much more helpful in reaching a compromise than ending in conflict. Some students found this fascinating:

"She gives like many new ideas and perspectives that we've never imagined [like] what people in the U.S. are thinking about Trump [and] her experience with those conflicts[...we knew]...how Trump is reported but it is of course sometimes biased because media always re-

port negative things...there [are] people who voted for him but nobody [admitted it]." (Interview)

Researcher A's careful word choice and tone plus her modeled behavior of validating and appreciating everyone's opinions and contributions showed students that every voice is worth listening to. Her example also encouraged students to take care with their language when expressing their opinions and reacting to those of their classmates:

Table 7. Student reflections on the language of valuing and appreciation when asked in interviews if the course caused any changes in their habits or opinions

> "I like group discussions because that made me think critically...I am kind of having trouble expressing my opinions, but now I kind of feel confident .... I really liked the ideology class, like are you on the right or left? That made me think … Some people think differently but I think differently, too. That experience was pretty precious I think." (Interview)

> "I didn't know about the situation in Japan because I didn't have such friends so I got a lot of information...also I could improve how to express my thoughts in English and...shape my thoughts [better]." (Interview)

This focus on language to create a sustainable dialogue created an environment conducive to productive group discussions. Students gave increasingly longer, even nuanced explanations for their opinions and moderated the intensity of their language choices. These actions were evidence of critical thinking that created a space for students to develop even deeper skills related to both their learning of global issues content and their use of English.

Language for critical thinking

Of the twelve positive student survey responses (out of fifteen total), students shared that the course allowed them to have discussions in which they could talk and think deeply about hard topics, that the paper helped them practice analyzing and connecting ideas, and that activities like role plays and mock negotiations were helpful in challenging them to evaluate and defend arguments. The three negative responses referenced feeling discomfort when discussing difficult topics due to insufficient background knowledge or English ability. Many students recognized their uncomfortable feelings as a sense of growth or self-awareness regarding their knowledge base. Though previously discussed in relation to identity, this is also a sign of development in critical thinking:

Table 8. Student reflections on challenges of critical thinking and growth they experienced

"At first I thought this class was really challenging but through the various lectures, role plays and reflections I think it enriched my understanding of global issues and made me more keen towards the international society which I wanted to nurture." (Survey Comment)
"Since I have taken this class, I understand the Islamic problems and I became able to think the position of Muslims." (Survey Comment)
"I didn't know about the situation in Japan because I didn't have such friends so I got a lot of information and also I could improve how to express my thoughts in English and also I could shape my thoughts more better way." (Interview)

Similarly, students indicated a sense of responsibility to learn and understand more for participation in global society as informed citizens. Students frequently expressed embarrassment or indicated increased curiosity about the world:

Table 9. Student reflections on global citizenship responsibility when asked if the course helped them to become better global citizens and if they thought courses like these were important to take while in university.

"I'm taking this class because I wanted to learn more about global issues. Right now I'm really ignorant about global issues, but I thought it's necessary for me to know the systems, backgrounds and issues of international society." (Interview)
"I think, you know, everyone should try to be a global citizen because we're basically on the same boat, on the Earth, you know. If we don't think about climate change it will affect everyone like one stance kinda influences others in the Earth. So yeah, I think this class helped me to think about it more." (Interview)
"I hardly had any knowledge about world affairs and I was kind of embarrassed about that so I thought that taking this course would be a good thing for me… You have to know this stuff, global issues, to be a proper person." (Interview)
I now know that like those international news sometimes affect our life. I started reading the English book for the populism...for the research paper but [also to learn] why people get so interested in populism...I started to read it for 50% my research paper, 50% for my own interest." (Interview)
"Before taking this class I know only few things about world religion, right or left wing etc. Now, I become very curious about the world!" (Survey Comment)

Acknowledgement of such responsibility suggests some students increasingly possessed higher order critical thinking skills.

Students also demonstrated evidence of critical thinking in the way they talked about issues or activities. Comments reflected the higher order thinking skills (HOTs) of Bloom's revised taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), particularly analysis and evaluation. For their research, students were encouraged to ask about the source of the material as well as to consider the primary ideology and agenda of the funding organization of the source in order to investigate potential bias or misinformation (Observation notes). This applied to their own personal growth, and in how they responded to the opinions of others. They evaluated their own beliefs and how they had or should be modified:

Table 10. Student reflections connecting to HOTs of Bloom's revised taxonomy: evaluation

"I think I need to be more sensitive to biases or presuppositions in my mind." (Interview)
"Before this class I hate the way be Gandhi because it had seemed to be ridiculous. But in my class, I learned the background thought of Gandhi and it changed me." (Interview)
"There were many things that changed my perspective on way of making peace." (Survey Comment)

Other students showed evidence of taking the knowledge they had learned about religion or political ideology and applying it to other scenarios. One student recalled, "My biggest memory is the part about religion and peace that's interesting because I didn't know about religion so much so I know I can understand other religion view and how they are connected to peace so that as/is? interesting." (Survey Comment). This transfer of information became the root of their research papers, demonstrating they were capable of thinking more critically about a variety of issues, not just those covered in class:

"I wrote about the nonviolent movement in Okinawa so I thought the nonviolent part was really interesting. I also liked the children's book part about bullying because of race. I was really surprised. Maybe I could not notice that situation so it was a problem for them and also for me." (Survey Comment)

Student reactions to this global issues classroom mirror Paul and Elder's (2006) description of critically thinking students, in that they

"question[ed] information, conclusions, and point[s] of view. They [strove] to be clear, accurate, precise, and relevant. They [sought] to

think beneath the surface, to be logical and fair. They [applied] these
skills to their reading and writing as well as to their speaking and listen-
ing (p. 2)."

Through all this, changes in how the students engaged topics as well as the lan-
guage they used indicated the ability to deconstruct biases in the input they re-
ceived, the language they produced, and most importantly, regarding their own
place in a global society. From our perspective, this is an essential part of what the
LPA aims to achieve.

Conclusion

University classes that focus on teaching both language and global issues en-
courage a practice of empathy and vulnerability, foster an atmosphere of respect,
increased tolerance and mutual understanding, require critical thinking and pro-
mote a habit of lifelong learning – all important and valuable characteristics of
sustainable and peaceful communities. Hosack (2011) agrees that educating about
global issues through the teaching and learning of a foreign language goes beyond
simply presenting and practicing content but encourages students to think about
becoming global citizens themselves.

"In addition to helping learners improve their English language profi-
ciency using the global issues approach, EFL teachers can also make a
significant contribution to their students' development as global citi-
zens… teachers need to articulate a broader role for themselves in
teaching for global citizenship, one that does not rely exclusively on the
selection of "global" content, but which emphasizes the distinctive con-
tribution they can make as language teachers, for example by nurturing
intercultural competence and skills for engaging in democratic dia-
logue" (Hosack, 2011, p. 137).

The types of classroom activities studied in this project exemplified skills that
are essential to graduating global citizens who are engaged and committed to a
more peaceful world.

By incorporating group discussions, role plays, debates, and including global
issues content, students can consistently participate in an environment that fosters
thinking about others, values new perspectives, and stimulates a curiosity about
the world while learning how to thrive academically. Such activities necessitate

students gaining opportunities for realistic practice and meeting an instructor who models these dynamics and characteristics in and beyond the classroom.

Our analysis of student reflections through interviews and surveys show that Peace Language approaches and global issues are a natural fit in the foreign language classroom because they both require critical thinking, an awareness of one's own self and a consideration of the Other. Students gained a clearer picture of their identity through understanding new perspectives and taking risks by engaging in uncomfortable conversations. They also learned the importance of using words to express emotions and opinions by watching others manage conflict through constructive communication and then trying it themselves. Throughout this process, the students were required to think critically, an action crucial when adapting one's own perspective after acquiring new understanding from the opinions of others.

The researchers hope their students recreate the model of a sustainable and peaceful classroom community off campus as well, by reproducing the linguistic and critical thinking strategies and skills they learned and practiced together. Although one can argue that communicating peacefully and sustainably is necessary for a career or for successful relationships, our students advocated best for the utility of Peace Language approaches by saying, "We're all in the same boat – Earth… you have to know this stuff to be a proper citizen" (Student Interview). We could not agree more. The creation of a peaceful and sustainable *global* conversation will require commitment, engagement, and conscientious communication from us all.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview questions and format

I. **Introduction**
   a. Greeting and thank you
   b. Explanation of project
   c. Consent to participate and record

II. **Warm-up**
   a. Was this class your first choice? Why or why not?
   b. How is the class going so far?
   c. Is the class what you expected? Why or why not?

III. **Content**
   a. In this course, do you think you learned more about global issues or more about how to write a research paper or was it equal? Why?
   b. What was your favorite topic or theme? Least favorite? Why?
   c. What was your favorite activity that helped you to learn about global issues? Least favorite? Why?

IV. **Communication**
   a. Do you feel you received enough help with writing a research paper in this class? Why or why not? What did you want more/less of?
   b. What was the most useful activity for you when learning to write an analytical research paper? Least useful? Why?

V. **Challenges and Benefits**
   a. What was your overall favorite thing about this course? Why?
   b. What was your overall least favorite thing about this course? Why?
   c. What was the most difficult thing about this course? Why?
   d. If you could change something about this course, what would you change? Why?

VI. **A culture of peace**
   a. Do you think this class helped you to become a better global citizen? Why or why not?
   b. Has this class changed your opinion about anything? Changed habits?
   c. Do you think it's important for ICU to offer classes like this? Why or why not?
   d. Would you recommend other students to take this course? Why or why not?

VII. **Advice and improvements**
   a. What is something that you wish your instructor knew?
   b. If you were the instructor, what would you do differently?
   c. Do you have any advice for new teachers giving a class like this for the first time?

VIII. **Conclusion**
   a. Is there anything else that you want me to know?
   b. Thank you very much for your time – I really appreciate it!

Appendix B

Pre/Post Questionnaire

The results of this survey will be used as part of an MA thesis as well as to develop curriculum of future English language courses. Please answer honestly. This survey is voluntary and anonymous; it does not affect your grade in any way.

Gender: M / F / Other   Age: _____   Year in university: _____

Have you ever visited another country besides Japan? Yes / No   If yes, where did you go? _____

If yes, what is the longest total time you have spent outside the country? _____

Circle the word which best describes your opinion on the following statements:

1. I feel confident about my English academic writing skills.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

2. I feel confident about my knowledge about world affairs/global issues.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

3. I am interested in learning about world affairs/global issues.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

4. I am interested in understanding different cultures/backgrounds.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

5. I am interested in discussing world affairs/global issues in English.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

6. I think it is important to learn about global issues and world problems in a foreign language class.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

7. I feel confident about my critical and analytical thinking skills.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

8. I feel confident about resolving conflicts.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

9. I am comfortable expressing my ideas in writing in English.

| Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly disagree | I don't know |

10. I am comfortable sharing my opinions during discussions in English.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree   I don't know

11. I feel it is important to share my opinions on global issues during class discussions.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree   I don't know

12. I think global awareness in expressing my own opinion in public will be helpful in my future career.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree   I don't know

13. I currently volunteer with an organization or club on campus or in the community.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree   I don't know

14. Are you glad that you decided to take this class? Why or why not?

_____
_____
_____
_____

15. Did your idea or knowledge of global issues change during the term? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____

16. Did your idea or knowledge of academic research writing in English change during the term? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____

17. Is there anything else you think it's important for me to know about this class?

_____
_____

Thank you for your time and your opinions in filling out this survey!