

## Interview with Professor Francisco Cardoso Gomes de Matos

**Andy Curtis**, Graduate School of Education, Anaheim University, California, USA

**Francisco Cardoso Gomes de Matos**, National University of Pernambuco, Recife, Brazil

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**Note:** As was mentioned in the Guest Editor’s introduction to this special issue of the *TESL Reporter*, Professor Gomes de Matos has been working for decades in this area, and we are grateful to him for sharing some of his most recent thoughts on the connections between language education and peace education. A list of questions was sent to Professor Gomes de Matos via email, to which he kindly responded, also via email. The written questions and answers were exchanged during the Spring, Summer and Fall of 2018.

**Andy** = Andy Curtis

**Francisco** = Francisco Cardoso Gomes de Matos

**Andy:** Many people in the fields of Language Education and Applied Linguistics, have never heard of Peace Linguistics. How would you answer the question ‘What is Peace Linguistics?’

**Francisco:** When language(s) and peace interact for the good of Humankind, a new branch of Applied Linguistics we find: Peace Linguistics (PL). It describes languages and varieties thereof as systems used for communicatively dignifying and peaceful purposes. Peace linguists are educated to help change ordinary language users into peaceful language users. The concept-term of Peace Linguistics made its lexicographic debut in 1999 as an entry in David Crystal’s *Penguin Dictionary of Language and Languages*: Peace Linguistics is an emerging approach with a focus on peaceful/nonviolent uses of language and an emphasis on attitudes which respect the dignity of individual language users and communities (p.255).

**Andy:** Why do you think Peace Linguistics has not become as well known as the other areas of Applied Linguistics, such as Second Language Acquisition (SLA)?

**Francisco:** Because Peace Linguistics is still an emerging area, in its academic infancy and with few practitioners, mostly from English-speaking countries. My

first uses of the term PL were in works in the areas of Diplomacy, Peace Psychology, and Conflict Resolution. My key-concept of Communicative Peace was published in a Sociolinguistics Newsletter in 1993 but it is still little known among applied linguists.

**Andy:** Even fewer people have ever heard of Nonkilling Linguistics. How would you answer the question ‘What is Nonkilling Linguistics?’

**Francisco:** Nonkilling Linguistics (NL) is the study of the interaction of language(s) and nonkilling, particularly how language users can be educated to avoid/prevent communicative killing through self-control and communicative dignity. NL is the concrete component in the continuum Peace Linguistics, Nonviolence Linguistics, Nonkilling Linguistics. Nonkilling linguists are educated to help ordinary language users to avoid killing linguistically, for instance, when threatening, intimidating, humiliating.

**Andy:** Why do you think Nonkilling Linguistics has not become as well known as the other areas of Applied Linguistics, such as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)?

**Francisco:** Nonkilling Linguistics was born very recently: in 2012 with the publication of the pioneering volume *Nonkilling Linguistics: Practical Applications*, edited by Patricia Friedrich. Published in Honolulu, HI, by the Center for Global Nonkilling, the book is available for free download at [www.nonkilling.org](http://www.nonkilling.org). For a brief account of the rise of NL, readers can check out my chapter on Language, Peace, and Conflict Resolution in *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, the third edition of which was published in 2014, edited by Peter T. Coleman, Morton Deutsch and Eric C. Marcus.

**Francisco:** *TESL Reporter* readers might also like to know that I have a poem on “TESOLers as Appliers of Nonkilling” in my book *Nurturing Nonkilling*. (“A Poetic Plantation”), published in 2011, by the Center for Global Nonkilling. In that text, I give this bit of advice to TESOLers: Let’s not use English to humiliate, depreciate, infuriate, or vituperate. I also advocate that we always use English to change foe into friend, harm into harmony, and kill into nonkill.

**Andy:** How could a field such as Peace Linguistics help community and world leaders communicate more peacefully and more positively with each other, and with the peoples they govern and lead?

**Francisco:** For world leaders to communicate more peacefully and positively, they should be educated to use languages for the good of Humankind in a spirit of humility. How? By harmonizing, instead of antagonizing; by proposing, instead of imposing; by respecting, instead of alienating; by inspiring, instead of conspiring; by edifying instead of vilifying. World leaders should be able to act as inspiring globalizers as expressed by the late U.S. political scientist Glenn D Paige [1929-2017]: “Let’s use nonkilling means to globalize respect and the benefits of life”. That visionary created the Center for Global Nonkilling and launched the Nonkilling Approach, now developing multidimensionally in many countries.

**Andy:** You often use ‘rhymed reflections’ to communicate your messages. Why do you think that ‘rhymed reflections’ are an effective way to communicate your messages?

**Francisco:** A Rhymed Reflection (RR) may not be considered poetry but rather a form of prose-poetry, or, to coin a term, ‘prosetry’. I have opted to use it in most of my current writings because of my conviction that a RR can help convey a meaningful, memorable, creatively designed message, especially when produced as posters. Accordingly, I argue that RRs can play more than an educational role: they can help deeply value the human soul.

**Andy:** What advice would you give to teachers developing courses on Peace Linguistics?

**Francisco:** First of all, I’d humbly suggest that teachers read my article, “Peace Linguistics for Language Teachers,” easily downloadable online. It features several bits of advice. I would also add that ESL teachers and learners have a Peacebuilding role to play in what they do and what they say. Furthermore, they could access my poster on “Goals of Peace Linguistics” in my e-book, *Rhymed Reflections. A Forest of Ideas/Ideals*, published in 2017, by ABA Books, in Brazil. Last but not least, I’d advise teachers developing PL courses to be at least minimally knowledgeable about the inspiring partner fields of Peace Education and Peace Psychology, as these fields make up a Peace Knowledge Continuum: Peace Education + Peace Psychology + Peace Linguistics.

**Andy:** What do you think are some valid and reliable ways to assess the learning outcomes of a university-level, credit-bearing course on Peace Linguistics?

**Francisco:** As I see it, three ways of assessing learning outcomes of a PL Course would be, first: Did students learn how to assess their self-control when communicating peacefully? How? What principles did they apply? What strategies did they activate? How motivated were they to become peaceful language users and promoters of communicative peace? Second: Did the course succeed in teaching students Peaceful Language Awareness, especially regarding vocabulary selection and the use of Positivizers? [Positive Language]. How effectively so? Did students engage in translating from Hate Language to Peaceful Language? Monolingually/Bilingually/Multilingually? Did the students engage in Crosscultural Peaceful Communication activities which enhanced their role as global peace citizens? How?

**Andy:** You are a member of the Global Advisory Board of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HDHS) network. What do you see as the relationships between HDHS and Peace Linguistics?

**Francisco:** Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies sees Dignity as a multidimensional concept, one of its key dimensions beings that of Communicative Dignity. Given the close relationship between Dignity and Peace, the interaction between HDHS and Peace Linguistics is one of sustainable, cross-fertilization as can be seen in my book *Dignity: A Multidimensional View*, published in 2013, which contains my RR on Peace Linguistics.

**Andy:** You are also a member of the Nonkilling Linguistics Research Committee, which is part of the Center for Global Nonkilling. According to the website of that center, the mission of the Center is: “to promote change toward the measurable goal of a killing-free world by means open to infinite human creativity”. What do you see as the relationships between the work of the Center, and its mission, and Peace Linguistics?

**Francisco:** I see those relationships as inter-complementary, interconnected, and mutually supportive. The Center for Global Nonkilling has been welcoming and sharing my ongoing work in Peace Linguistics and Nonkilling Linguistics, especially through its Nonkilling Arts Committee, which publishes a Newsletter, edited by former diplomat Bill Bhaneja. In short, the Honolulu Center and Peace Linguistics walk hand in hand, thus contributing to a sustainable global approach to peaceful/nonviolent/nonkilling understanding between/among peoples and nations.

**Andy:** What do you see as the immediate future of Peace Linguistics, in the next one or two years?

**Francisco:** I see an immediate future in which possibly M.A. dissertations and PhD theses will be written on the structures, uses, and effects of Peace Linguistics. Peace Linguistics could be included on the agenda of events (local/regional/global) sharing a commitment to the life-improving force of peaceful language use. Peace Linguistics could be given a prominent place in Peace Studies. Peace Linguists could be invited to share their innovative approach with colleagues in other branches of Applied Linguistics and to interact with them on line. And Peace Linguistics could become attractive for publishers in several languages, especially as works for different age levels are planned and marketed.

**Andy:** Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to our questions, and for all your good work in this field over many years.

**Francisco:** You're welcome. Thank you for this opportunity to share some of my ideas with the readers of the *TESL Reporter*.

### About the Authors

*Andy Curtis served as the 50th President of the TESOL International Association, from 2015 to 2016. He is based in Ontario, Canada, from where he works as an international education consultant for teaching and learning organizations worldwide. His recent books include Intercultural Communication in Asia: Education, Language and Values (co-edited with Roly Sussex, 2018, Springer), and Methods and Methodologies for Language Teaching: The Centrality of Context (2017, Palgrave).*

*Francisco Gomes de Matos, Ph.D. is an applied peace linguist from Recife, Brazil. He has degrees in Languages, Law, and Linguistics. He is Professor Emeritus at the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco where he is active in the Dom Helder Camara Human Rights Commission. He is one of the pioneers in Linguistic Rights (author of 1984 "Plea for a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights") and in the emerging area of Peace Linguistics.*