
The New Peace Linguistics: Guest Editor's Concluding Comments

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Linguists Love Language – if they do not, then they may find themselves deeply unfulfilled and should look into other careers as soon as possible, lest they do any professional disservice to themselves or to those around them. One of the signs of that love of language is the enjoyment found in coming up with original phrases, acronyms, etc. that succinctly describe what may have been in existence for a long time already, but which has not been named as such. For example, as discussed in the introduction to this special issue, the possibility of Language for Peacebuilding Purposes, or LPP, as part of LSP (Language for Specific Purposes). Also, Johnson and Murphey's notion of "Peace Linguaging", drawing on the idea of "linguaging" and extending it to become what could come to be known as "Peacebuilding through Language Teaching and Learning" (PLTL). Added to that is the important addition to the field of the Language of Peace Approach (LPA), as proposed by Oxford, Gregersen and Olivero, in this issue. To the non-linguist, the expanding of a lexicon within a particular field of study may seem like somewhat self-indulgent wordplay, but the point was made in the introduction that *what we call things matters*.

These areas of enquiry – from the original notion of "Peace Linguistics" or LPP, to "Peace Linguaging" or PLTL, to the LPA and to our current understanding of "Peace Linguistics" – should not be presented as having proceeded along "neat-and-tidy" lines of development (of the kind sometimes presented in historical or retrospective accounts of the development of a field). These areas have grown up alongside each other; sometimes along parallel lines, sometimes overlapping, sometimes as offshoots and new branches. For example, Oxford's work on the language of peace and harmonious communication (2013), as well as her work on understand peace cultures (2014), led her and her co-authors to the formulation of the LPA. My work in this area can now be characterized as a "New Peace Linguistics" (NPL), by which I mean a return to the notion of "linguistics" as "the scientific study of language" (Lyons, 1968; the Linguistic Society of America, n.d).

Except that, in the NPL, rather than *scientific* study, which runs the risk of scientism (Sorell, 2013), we are interested in the in-depth, *systematic* study of language. Specifically, the NPL is focused on the systematic study of the language produced by some of the most powerful people in the world today, such as presidents, prime ministers, and other political, economic and military leaders, as it is they who ultimately get to decide whether we go to war, or make peace with each other. Whereas some of the earlier versions of PL focused on how language could and should be used in ways that avoid or de-escalate conflict, the NPL is concerned with analyzing actual language produced, in terms of the direct and indirect references to peace and its opposites, including war. Such references may not necessarily be causal. For example, if a president talks a lot about war, their country may be no more or less likely to go to war than the country of a president who talks a lot about peace. In fact, the opposite may even be true, i.e., those world leaders who keep mentioning the possibility of war may be issuing a warning or making a thinly veiled threat, designed to discourage their enemies from escalating tensions. Likewise, those world leaders who talk a lot about world peace and nuclear disarmament may in fact be, in some Janus-faced fashion, trying to secretly stockpile weapons of mass destruction. Therefore, the NPL is not about the simple equating of war-talk and peace-talk with war and peace, but it is about looking more carefully and more closely to find underlying, deeper layers and levels of meaning.

This NPL is still part of Discourse Analysis (DA). However, whereas DA has been broadly defined as “the analysis of language in use” (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 1), making DA a part of Sociolinguistics, the NPL is more narrowly focused on analyzing the language of those within whose power it is to start wars or to make peace. Currently, the Linguistic Society of America defines DA as “the analysis of language ‘beyond the sentence’”, which they contrast with “modern linguistics, which [is] chiefly concerned with the study of grammar: the study of smaller bits of language”, using phonetics and phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax, in relation to sounds, word parts, meaning, and word order, respectively. The LSA contrasts that description of ‘modern linguistics’ with the work of: “Discourse analysts [who] study larger chunks of language as they flow together” (www.linguisticsociety.org).

One of the differences between the NPL and DA or Sociolinguistics relates to the idea of language analysis “beyond the sentence” and studying “larger chunks of language”, as the NPL is also interested in the power of individual words. For

example, the NPL is interested in the use of words such as “native” and “nationalist”, because of who is using them, why they are using them, and how people are being influenced by such language, especially when it is embedded within the language of world leaders, broadcast instantly and globally (increasingly, via social media). For example, in October 2018, at a midterm elections rally in Houston, Texas, President Donald Trump described himself as a “nationalist”, saying:

“A globalist is a person that wants the globe to do well, frankly, not caring about our country so much... You know, they have a word – it’s sort of became old-fashioned – it’s called a nationalist. And I say, really, we’re not supposed to use that word. You know what I am? I’m a nationalist, okay? I’m a nationalist. Nationalist. Nothing wrong. Use that word. Use that word” (Cummings, 2018).

In the NPL, that chunk of presidential text, of around 70 words, is worthy of at least a ten-fold analysis, i.e., a text analysis of well over 700 words could be carried out. However, to be brief, one of the overall goals of the text was to “play to the crowd”, in a so-called “red state”, as the majority of the electorate there (approx. 52%) voted Republican in the 2016 presidential elections in the USA. By telling the listeners what they want to hear – “Put the interests of the USA first” – the speaker reinforces their “Us vs. Them” mindset, and consolidates his position using the ancient approach of “Divide and Conquer”. There is nothing new, original or creative about such an approach, yet, in certain contexts, such as Houston, Texas, it can still be highly effective in bitterly dividing a population against itself.

The President presented a false dichotomy of either caring for your country *or* caring about the rest-of-the-world, conveniently and completely ignoring the fact that it is not a mutually exclusive proposition, as it is entirely possible to care for your country *whilst at the same time* caring about the rest-of-the-world. Ironically, the online Merriam-Webster dictionary of English defines “frankly” as “in truth”, in this case, used to present what is obviously an either-or falsehood (Curtis, 2018a). In addition, the NPL would take note of the unspecified “they”, in “they have a word”, the use of “old-fashioned”, as some sort of appeal to “traditional values”, and the use of pseudo-rhetorical questions, such as “You know what I am?” Also of note would be repeating the same key word four times in fewer than 30 words: “it’s called a nationalist. And I say, really, we’re not supposed to use that word. You know what I am? I’m a nationalist, okay? I’m a nationalist. Na-

tionalist”, and repeating the same instruction to his fans and followers: “Use that word. Use that word”.

Of course, President Trump is not the only world leader who deliberately employs that kind of conflict-creating language so efficiently and effectively. For example, such language was frequently used during the Brexit Referendum in 2016, when populist and propagandist leaders in the UK, who believe that great Britain is still an empire and does not need Europe (or any other country), fed off the fear of non-white immigrants “over-running” England (Weaver, 2018). And anywhere that far-right politics are playing out now, political leaders can be seen and heard using such language to stoke fear, anger and even hatred of the “invaders” (Bremmer, 2018; Choi, 2018). Therefore, one of the areas of particular interest in the NPL is what those in power say and write. However, such leaders, no matter how powerful they are, represent only a tiny fraction of a percent of the world’s population, in the hundreds or thousands, in a world made up of billions.

Recently, I have written about intercultural communication in Asia, in relation to education, language and values (Curtis 2018b), and proposed a three-part framework for understanding intercultural communication, based on Individual, Institutional and International cultures, and although PL was not part of that framework, the NPL could help with conflict resolution at those different levels. By that I mean the NPL could help avoid or de-escalate conflicts between individuals, between small, medium and large groups, as well as conflicts between nations, by helping the participants understand the central role of language in those conflicts, and systematically analyzing the language being used. In that way, the NPL has the potential to make significant contributions to conflict resolution, the establishment of which, as a distinct academic area of enquiry, is often credited to the Australian civil servant, High Commissioner and academic, John W. Burton (1915-2010). His culminating work, after more than 40 years of publishing (since the mid-1950s) was his last book, a relatively slim volume (100-page) titled *Conflict Resolution: Its Language and Processes* (1996). At that time, Burton wrote: “nowhere have the language and processes of conflict resolution been addressed and explained for understanding by the general reader” (1996, back cover). According to Burton: “there is the need for a new language... [as] ...a study of language shortens the discovery process”, by which he meant that a dictionary of conflict resolution, of

the kind he wrote, could help those working in that field to focus on the language being used by the different parties.

Some 20 years after Burton’s last book, the award-winning performing artist Dana Caspersen published *Changing the Conversation: The 17 Principles of Conflict Resolution* (2015). As the title of her book shows, even though there is very little language analysis in the book, Caspersen focuses on the role of language in resolving or transforming conflict, with chapter titles such as: “Don’t hear attack. Listen for what is behind the words”, “Talk to the other person’s best self” and “When listening, avoid making suggestions”. A more recent publication is the book *Conflict Resolution: The Art of Peacekeeping* (Ugoh, 2018), which identifies three factors influencing mediation, i.e., Culture, Language, and Power Balance. However, the chapter on “Mediation and Language” is *just two pages* (pp. 32-33), thereby highlighting the fact that even recent writings on conflict resolution may be overlooking, or at best seriously underestimating, the importance of language. Therefore, the NPL has the potential to help resolve conflicts, if they can be resolved – or to find ways of moving forward peacefully, even if they cannot be fully resolved – at the one-to-one, face-to-face level, as well as at the international, political level, and at the different points of contact between those two ends of the communication continuum.

Having looked at where we are now with the NPL, and where we might be headed, it is important to be clear on what the NPL is not. As noted in the introduction to this special issue, and above, the NPL is *not* about how people could or should use language. It is about how they actually use language, based on linguistic analyses of the spoken and written texts produced by some of the most powerful people in the world, from a single-word utterance, to their sentences, paragraphs, pages, and whole texts. The NPL is also not about so-called “Political Correctness” (PC), recently described as referring to: “language that seems intended to give the least amount of offense, especially when describing groups identified by external markers such as race, gender, culture, or sexual orientation. The concept has been discussed, disputed, criticized, and satirized by commentators from across the political spectrum” (Roper, 2018). According to Roper, “PC” is not the more recent phenomenon that it is sometimes presented as, the origins of “PC” can be traced back more than a century, to the Marxist-Leninist vocabulary following the 1917 Russian Revolution. One reason that the NPL is not interested in whether language

items are considered to be “PC” or not is because both ends of the political spectrum, from the far-right to the far-left, use the term “PC” to describe whatever does not fit with their beliefs, making the term essentially meaningless.

Although it is tempting to engage in some crystal-ball-gazing, and speculate on the future of the New Peace Linguistics, I will avoid drawing such prophetic conclusions. However, I am confident that this special issue of the *TESL Reporter* marks the beginning of a new/renewed interest in this important area of applied linguistics, about which we will be hearing a great deal more in 2019 and in the years to come.

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