

Back from the Battlefield: Resurrecting Peace Linguistics

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Abstract

This paper seeks to review efforts to develop the field of Peace Linguistics. Based on reviewing 20 years of published articles in the *Journal of Peace Education* and *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, I identified what appears to be a significant and on-going disconnect – a gap – between Language Studies and Peace Studies, or between Language Education and Peace Education, or between Peace Education/Studies and Linguistics/Applied Linguistics. In the second part of this paper, I explore this gap in more depth, and propose some possible reasons for this disconnect. In the third and final section, I give some details of a new course, Peace Linguistics, piloted by the English Language Teaching and Learning Department at Brigham Young University-Hawaii, in January and February of 2017.

Key Words: Peace Education, Peace Linguistics, Peace Studies

Introduction and Overview

Over the last 50 years or so, many hundreds of books and papers on Peace Education and Peace Studies have been published. It would, then, not be feasible to attempt a comprehensive review of such a mountain of literature here, which raises the question of how to focus such a review. To do that, I reviewed the papers in the *Journal of Peace Education*, from 2004 to 2017, and the papers in *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, from 1996 to 2016 (there have been no issues published, yet, in 2017). There are, of course, many other journals that could have been the focus of such a review, some of which were also consulted, but these two are comprehensive reflections of scholarly work in this area, covering a period of two decades.

Based on reviewing the papers in those two journals, there appears to be a significant and on-going disconnect – a gap – between Language Studies and Peace Studies, or between Language Education and Peace Education, or between Peace

Education/Studies and Linguistics/Applied Linguistics. Following a summary of my 20-year journal review, I will explore this gap in more depth, and propose some possible reasons for this disconnect. In the third and final section, I give some details of a new course, Peace Linguistics, piloted by the English Language Teaching and Learning Department at Brigham Young University-Hawaii, in January and February of 2017.

A Brief Review of Peace Education via the Journal of Peace Education

The first issue of the *Journal of Peace Education* appeared in 2004, and it is now in its fourteenth year. Over that time, approximately 30 issues of the *JPE* have been produced, with an average of around six main papers per issue, totaling nearly 200 published papers on Peace Education (PE) in the *JPE* over the last 14 years. In reviewing those papers, I was interested to see how many – or how few – of them focused explicitly on aspects of language or linguistics in relation to PE.

In the one-page editorial of the first issue of *JPE*, John Synott wrote: “Over several decades, since the period after World War I, teachers and researchers in many cultures and nations have contributed to building and distributing a solid body of theoretical and practical knowledge and publications in peace education” (2004, p. 3). However, World War I ended 99 years ago, in November 1918, after which more than 80 years lapsed before the *JPE* was launched, indicating a slow but perhaps steady progress in the movement away from a focus on War to a focus on Peace; progress which was no doubt greatly slowed, or even halted, during World War II, between 1939 and 1945. Therefore, in spite of Synott’s statement that the “building and distributing [of] a solid body of theoretical and practical knowledge and publications in peace education” started after WWI, it seems that PE, as a distinct disciplinary area of study, may not have taken off until after WWII. An example of early book on PE, predating the *JPE* by 30 years, is Christoph Wulf’s *Handbook on Peace Education*, published in 1974, by the International Peace Research Association, in Frankfurt, Germany. And an example of what may have been a kind of precursor to Peace Education is *Education for Peace* (1949), by Herbert Edward Read (1893 to 1968), who was an English art historian, poet, literary critic and philosopher.

In defining PE, Synott (2004, p. 3), drew on the work of Leonisa Ardizzone, who studied non-formal youth organizations in New York City, and who wrote, in

the journal *Peace & Change*: “Originally a study of the causes of war and its prevention, peace education since has evolved into studying violence in all its manifestations and educating to counteract the war system for the creation of a peace system – a peace system on both the structural and international level (Ardizzone, 2003, p. 430)”. In the same inaugural issue of the *JPE*, Gavriel Saloman at the University of Haifa, in Israel, asked: “What is Peace Education?” (pp. 123-124), while making the point that PE: “is clearly different things for different people in different places” (p. 123). For Saloman: “an important aspect of peace education is about making peace and living in peace with an adversary, another unfavourable group: a minority group, a group of immigrants, another ethnic group, tribe, religion or political party” (2004, p. 123). Distinguishing between PE and Conflict Resolution, Saloman continued: “Peace education pertains to relationships between groups which are usually involved in some conflict or tense relationship, whereas conflict resolution usually pertains to relations between individuals in conflict.” (p. 123), implying a difference in scale and scope between the two, between the international and the individual.

Although there appear to be very few articles in the *JPE* that directly address linguistic aspects of PE, a number of early articles did touch on what might be considered language-oriented aspects of PE. For example, Jo Oravec (2004) wrote about warblogs and peaceblogs in PE, and Sherron Roberts (2005) reported on the use of poetry in promoting peaceful classrooms. Also, Greg Tanaka presented the findings of his study on storytelling and PE, while Phylis Johnson, in her paper on “speaking to the heart of oral contextualization” (2006, pp. 1-17), continued to explore storytelling, but in the media, stating that: “Long overdue in the classroom is a critical examination of media coverage when seen and told through the unique vantage point of the audience and storyteller” (p. 1). All four of these papers in the *JPE* are language-based, in one way or another, as blogs, poetry and stories all require language, whether written or spoken, and they cannot exist without language. However, these illustrate the difference between using language *to communicate*, and the systematic study of *how* language is used to communicate, which comes under Applied Linguistics.

In 2007, in the fourth year of the *JPE*, Anita Wenden’s paper, ‘Educating for a critically literate civil society: Incorporating the linguistic perspective into peace education’, was published (pp. 163-180), which built on her earlier work (Wenden,

2003) on the importance of linguistic factors in achieving a comprehensive peace (published in *Peace & Change*). Wenden began her *JPE* paper by stating: “Despite the multifaceted role language plays in promoting direct and indirect violence, activities that would develop the linguistic knowledge and critical language skills for understanding how discourse shapes individual and group beliefs and prompts social action are conspicuously absent from peace education” (p. 163). Wenden (2007) presented a framework which she referred to as Critical Language Education, which she believed could “be used to incorporate the linguistic perspective into peace education” (p. 163). In the introduction to her paper, Wenden quoted the Russian ethnologist, Valery Tishkov, who wrote: “Conflicts start with words and words can kill no less than bullets” (2004, p. 80). However, the “conspicuously absent” “linguistic knowledge and critical language skills” appear to have remained that way, as Wenden’s paper is one of the only ones – in nearly 200 papers published over 14 years in the *JPE* – to explicitly focus on language or linguistics in PE.

It is not clear why so few papers on PE, as represented by the *JPE*, have explicitly focus on language or linguistics, but one possible reason may be the compartmentalization of knowledge on which academic institutions are built. In such arrangements, sometimes referred to as ‘silos’, peace educators research, write, publish and present on PE, while applied linguists research, write, publish and present on applied linguistics, thereby ‘siloizing’ the work in these disciplinary areas of academic endeavor. That may be the result of the ‘Publish or Perish’ pressures in universities, which lead to large bodies of knowledge being built up, side-by-side, over long periods of time, but not being connected. Whatever the reasons for this apparent disconnect, if, to paraphrase Tishkov, *words are weapons*, then it makes sense to focus on language, not just in the sense of ‘the language of peace’, but to engage in a systematic, linguistic study of the languages of peace, of war, and of the various stages in between.

One of the few other papers in the *JPE* that focuses on language is Arda Arikan’s paper on ‘Environmental peace education in foreign language learners’ English grammar lessons’ (2009, pp. 87-99), in which he reported on what he refers to as Contextualized Grammar Teaching and Socially Responsible Teaching, in Turkey. After analyzing classroom data from 50 fourth-year pre-service English language teachers, and 46 tenth-grade students, Arikan concluded that: “learning English grammar in relation to environmental peace education is an effective strat-

egy that can be used in foreign language teaching” (p. 87). Given the current situation in Turkey, which some commenters believe is increasingly at risk of descending into a full-blown civil war, environmental peace education may be more important there now than ever before.

Eight years after Arikan’s paper, in the most recent issue of the *JPE*, the use of English language textbooks and PE has resurfaced, with Mehari Gebregeorgis’s (2017) paper on the use of a textbook titled *English for Ethiopia* for grade nine students. That paper is also useful as it revisits questions around the meaning of ‘Peace’. Gebregeorgis draws on the work of Johan Galtung (b. 1930), the Norwegian sociologist and mathematician who was one of the founders of the Peace Research Institute in Oslo in 1959, and who is credited with being one of the founders of peace studies and conflict studies: “Because of its abstract nature, different scholars understand the concept of ‘peace’ differently. Sometimes it is narrowed down to the mere absence of war, which is now called ‘negative peace’ (Galtung 1967; 12)” (Gebregeorgis, 2017, p. 54). The nomenclature is perhaps unfortunate, as ‘negative’ has, by definition, negative connotations, but the phrase does give the sense of peace *in absentia*, in this case, in the absence of war.

Gebregeorgis (2017) also draws on the work of Ajith Balasooriya, in explaining how different professions understand ‘Peace’ differently: “for example, peace could primarily mean democracy, absence of poverty, and law and order for politicians, economists and lawyers, respectively (Balasooriya 2001)” (Gebregeorgis, 2017, p. 57). And 50 years after Galtung (1967) coined the phrase ‘negative peace’, Balasooriya reiterates that point: “On the other hand, the meaning of peace goes beyond the absence of war. It encompasses no ‘violence in all forms such as conflict, threat to life, social degradation, discrimination, oppression, exploitation, poverty, injustice and so on’ (Balasooriya 2001, 10)” (Gebregeorgis, 2017, p. 57). However, it should be noted that Galtung’s reference to “the *mere* absence of war” (emphasis added) should not be taken to imply that the absence of war is a small thing. As we see in the daily news reports, on the scale and scope of global armed conflicts in the world today, it is important to recognize that “the absence of war” can still be a profoundly difficult state to be achieved, to be sustained, and to be appreciated.

Before wrapping up this brief review of the PE literature, as exemplified in the *JPE*, it is worth noting that, although there have been only a handful of the 200

or so articles published over 14 years which explicitly focus on language or linguistics, one of the recurring language-related themes has been Narrative Enquiry, which is language-dependent. For example, in Turkey, Yasemin Karaman-Kepenekci (2010) analyzed children’s rights in stories recommended for children there, and in Israel, Liora Israeli (2011) examined different interpretations of two children’s stories: ‘The Ugly Duckling’ published in 1843 and written by the Dutch storyteller Hans Christian Andersen, and the Israeli classic ‘Raspberry Juice’, written by Haya Shenhav and published in 1970. Continuing the exploration of narrative and PE, Farhat Shazad (2011) analyzed representations of Canada’s role in the War on Terror, in terms of what she refers to as “the fantasized nationalist narrative”, and Sara Zamir (2012) evaluated “the contribution of the emerging Israeli genre of bilingual literature, Arabic and Hebrew, to peace education” (p. 265). It appears, therefore, that although Literature has received some attention within PE, Language has received far less.

Going Deeper into the Gap

To further explore this gap between Language Studies and Peace Studies, or between Language Education and Peace Education, or between Peace Education/Studies and Linguistics/Applied Linguistics, I reviewed another long-established and well-respected PE journal, *The International Journal of Peace Studies*, published since 1996. My review showed a similar paucity of papers focused on language and/or linguistics. In fact, for example, of the 200-plus papers published in the 42 volumes of the IJPS, I found only three that focused explicitly on language, all three of which appeared in the same volume and issue, in 2003, in a section titled ‘Peace and Language’. In the first paper in that section, Ineke van der Valk discussed racism as a threat to global peace (no page numbers given), and in the second paper, Birgit Brock-Utne “looked at the language question in Africa as a question of social class and of power” in relation to the questions: “What social classes are profiting from the continued use of the Euro-languages in Africa? Who benefits? Who loses out?” (no page numbers given). In the third paper, Cheng-Feng Shih reported on the relationships between language and ethnic politics in Taiwan, concluding that language was not a major factor in that context: “On balance, the demarcation between the Mainlanders and the Natives is not so much based on linguistic differences as on their dissimilar degrees of attachment

to the island” (2003, p.100). In addition to those three papers, a few others in *The International Journal of Peace Studies* have also taken a linguistic approach, for example, looking at the use of medical metaphors in peace research (Väyrynen, 1998). Some papers on the importance of dialog in peace building have also been published in the *Journal*, for example, in terms of “the local discourse dynamics of empathy” (Head, 2012, p.40) or using music as alternative to spoken words, as “Conceptualizing dialogue wholly in terms of verbal processes ... raises serious issues of inclusivity based on the limits of language.” (Pruitt, 2011, p.83). There have also been a few papers in the *Journal* on the narratives of conflict and the conflict transformation (Funk and Said, 2004), but on the whole, papers on language were few and far between, and papers on linguistics appear to be non-existent. Brief reviews of other journals, including the journal *Peace and Change*, published since 1972, revealed a similar pattern, which raised the question of how long these two bodies of knowledge have been growing, side-by-side, but largely disconnected.

According to Aline Stomfay-Stitz’s entry, ‘A History of Peace Education in the United States of America’ (2008), in the online, open-access *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*, developed by Teachers College, Columbia University:

The American Peace Society was founded in Boston in 1828, and by 1850 there were fifty American peace societies in existence nationwide (Bartlett, 1944). Their official journals carried frequent messages that the perfection of the individual as well as society were possible through the realm of education. Schools and the printed word were considered logical vehicles to lay out a pathway to peace in American society (p.1)

In terms of the history of language education, Claude Germain, in his book, *Évolution de l’Enseignement des Langues: 5000 Ans D’Histoire* (1993) summarizes five thousand years of such history. Given these long histories, it may be even more surprising that the two domains of disciplinary knowledge and fields of scholarly enquiry do not appear to have been more extensively connected before. However, the idea of Peace Linguistics was discussed in the 1990s, according to Gomes de Matos (2014), who wrote:

An important step toward the birth of Peace Linguistics took place with the publication of an entry by Crystal (1999) in which we are told that that way of doing Linguistics is ‘an approach which emerged in the 1990s among many

linguists and language teachers in which linguistic principles, methods, findings and applications were seen as a means of promoting peace and human rights at a global level. It emphasized the value of linguistic diversity and multilingualism’ (p. 415)

The reference to “many linguists and language teachers” appears to have been something of an exaggeration, or it may be that very few of those linguists and language teachers followed-up on the initial interest in Peace Linguistics.

Gomes de Matos (2014) went onto refer to his own work that followed Crystal’s, in which Gomes de Matos (2005) characterized Peace Linguistics “as [an] interdisciplinary approach aimed at helping educational systems create conditions for the preparation of human beings as peaceful language users” (2014, p. 415). One of the few other writers and researchers working towards bridging the gap between Peace Education and Applied Linguistics, in addition to Gomes de Matos, is Patricia Freidrich. In her 2007 paper, ‘English for Peace: Toward a Framework of Peace Sociolinguistics’ (pp. 72-83), published in the journal *World Englishes*, Freidrich wrote: “As of the 1990s, the world witnessed a growing concern for issues of peace and an emerging awareness of the relationship between communication and peace. As part of this new order, Peace Linguistics has branched out of Linguistics as a specialized field in Peace Studies, one that hopes to influence the ways we communicate and educate” (2007, p. 72). However, it appears that, in spite of the initial interest in connecting Peace Education and Applied Linguistics in the 1990s, Peace Linguistics did not, in fact, establish itself as a “specialized field”. One possible reason for that non-establishing could be that, as Freidrich noted: “despite its potential contribution, Peace Linguistics has not been systematized into a theoretical model” (2007, p. 72).

Freidrich’s comments raises a number of additional questions, starting with why Peace Linguistics would be “a specialized field in Peace Studies”, rather than a branch of Applied Linguistics. That may be a clue to why, in the ten years since Wenden (2007, see above) and Freidrich (2007) little, if anything, appears to have happened to move forward the development of Peace Linguistics, which may be the result of intellectual territoriality, in which academic knowledge must be clearly situated within specific disciplinary domains, as part of the Publish or Perish pressures referred to above. As a result, and perhaps ironically, a truly interdisciplinary field of study such as Peace Linguistics may not have become established precisely

because its interdisciplinary nature makes claims of academic ownership difficult, thereby creating potential problems with funding, staffing, and other possible resource implications and issues.

Another question relates to Freidrich's mention of the need for a *theoretical* model. The field of Theoretical Linguistics has been established for at least 40 years, as shown, for example, in the journal *Theoretical Linguistics*, published since 1974, starting with articles on such topics as tense-logic and the semantics of the Russian aspects (Hoepelman, 1974), through to the dynamics of ellipsis (2016, Kobele & Merchant). However, whereas papers on Theoretical Linguistics may focus on tense, aspect and ellipsis, *peace is practical*, not theoretical; in the same way that the death and destruction of war is heartbreakingly real, and not at all theoretical. Therefore, rather than Peace Linguistics being "systematized into a theoretical model" (Freidrich, 2007, p. 72), perhaps more practical, applied models would have helped, and could help, Peace Linguistics to move forward, and become a distinct but interdisciplinary domain. One way of helping to move the development of Peace Linguistics forward would be to develop a course, such as the one described below.

The First Peace Linguistics Course

The Place and The Time

In the Summer of 2016, the English Language Teaching and Learning Department at Brigham Young University-Hawaii (BYUH) and I began a discussion regarding the possibility of developing a new course on Peace Linguistics. Our assumption was that such a course must have already been taught before. However, after some months of searching, we could find no evidence of a Peace Linguistics course having been taught anywhere else before, and certainly not at the university-level, as a credit-bearing course, counting towards a first degree, or even as part of any graduate degree program that we could find.

In terms of place, a key part of the vision of BYU-Hawaii, as stated on the University's website, is to: "assist individuals ... in their efforts to influence the establishment of peace internationally". The site lists five ways of realizing this vision, the second of which is: "Preparing men and women with the intercultural and leadership skills necessary to promote world peace". Those two points address

the question of why this first Peace Linguistics course took place at BYUH, rather than elsewhere.

In terms of the timing of the course, and in answer to the question ‘Why Now?’ recent political developments, especially those in the USA, may have played a part. For example, on 27 January 2017, the newly-installed President of the United States issued one of his many Executive Orders, which implemented a 90-day entry ban for people travelling from seven majority-Muslim countries – Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Yemen and Somalia – to the United States. The Order also put in place a 120-day suspension of all refugee programs in the USA, and an indefinite ban on the entry of all Syrian refugees to the USA. Since that Order was issued, organizations such as the TESOL International Association – the largest association of its kind in the world – and many other such organizations have been communicating with their members, and issuing public statements reacting and responding to these Orders. For example, on 31 January 2017, the TESOL International Association published a statement on its website, which describes the Order as:

the latest manifestation of the heated and xenophobic rhetoric that has undermined the fabric of the United States. This contentious act fails to satisfy its intentions to make the United States a safer nation. The exclusion of travelers, immigrants, and refugees from these Middle Eastern and North African countries only serves to make the United States more vulnerable, unfairly targets immigrants and refugees, and stands in stark contrast to the ideals that the United States was built on ...

If such Orders become a feature of the new presidential administration in the USA, as they seem set to be, then it is possible that the world could be facing a period of fear, anger and hatred on a scale not seen in the US for a long time. One of the essential counterbalances to such powerful, destructive and divisive language is a greater understanding of Peace, through language and linguistics education, which was one of the goals of the new Peace Linguistics course.

The Focus and The Contents

The full details of the pilot Peace Linguistics course will be presented in a separate paper. In the meantime, some of the main features of the course will be presented here. The course was offered at BYU-Hawaii in January and February 2017, over eight weeks, with the first and last week taught online, and the six main

weeks made up of six hours of classes per week, in the form of three two-hour classes, making 36 hours of in-class, face-of-face teaching, plus two weeks of on-line learning. The first cohort started with 20 students, from BYUH's BA TESOL program (celebrating its 50th year this year), as well as students in the Intercultural Peace Building and Intercultural Studies programs, and a student of English Literature. The 19 students who finished the course came from Hong Kong, the Philippines, Mainland China, Canada, Samoa, Mongolia, Tahiti, Japan, and the USA, reflecting the highly multilingual, multicultural nature of BYUH's all-undergraduate campus.

As stated in the original course syllabus, the course objectives were:

By the end of this course, successful participants will be able to:

1. demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the linguistics of language used to communicate for peaceful purposes
2. explore, examine and articulate the cultural and linguistic aspects of the languages of conflict and of peace
3. present and explain the use of poetic language, drawings, photographs, music, and other forms of text to illustrate different aspects of communicating for peaceful purposes
4. gather, analyze and present data on people's perceptions of peace, in relation to language and culture
5. carry out a critical discourse analysis of a text which shows how language can be used to create peace or to create conflict.

In terms of course materials, one of the benefits of being the first Peace Linguistics course to be taught was that we were able to start with a *tabula rasa*, a 'blank slate'. However, by the same token, one of the challenges of being the first Peace Linguistics course to be taught was that there were no existing courses or course templates that could have served as a starting point. After careful consideration of a number of possible course texts, we chose *The Language of Peace: Communicating to Create Harmony*, written by Rebecca Oxford, and published in 2013 by Information Age Publishing. Fortunately, as that book costs more than 50 US dollars to buy, it was freely available to the course participants through BYUH's library, as a downloadable e-book, at no cost to the students.

Related to the benefits and the challenges of creating a course that appears not to have been taught anywhere before, the original course syllabus employed

the age-old metaphor of The Journey, by including a note titled, ‘Traveling Through Uncharted Lands and Seas’, which stated:

Please be aware that Winter 2017 will be *the first time* that this course has been taught – not just the first time at BYUH, but it may be the first time that a course on Peace Linguistics has been taught *anywhere*. This makes us sort-of ‘pioneers’! And although this is an exciting position to be in, like all ‘pioneers’, we may well face some challenges as we travel through and over these uncharted lands and seas. Consequently, there may well need to be changes to the arrangements below, which represent the planned route. However, the actual route may be different, depending on the obstacles and opportunities we may encounter on our journey together.

Conclusion

Based on the feedback from the course participants, from the English Language Teaching and Learning Department, and from BYU–Hawaii University, the first Peace Linguistics course appeared to have been a success. However, as with any innovative and original endeavor, it is not possible to ‘get it all right, first time’. There are, therefore, a number of changes we would make when the course is offered for the second time, and in relation to that – in terms of *when* rather than *if* – in April 2017, as this paper was being concluded, BYUH decided to make the Peace Linguistics course a permanent offering. To quote the title of a song made famous by Ella Fitzgerald, in the 1950s, “This Could Be The Start of Something Big.”

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